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PERSONALITY IN POLITICS

by

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TO
MARGARET

PERSONALITY IN POLITICS

CHAPTER I

SOME PROBLEMS STATED

“Nor don’t the ducks neither,” replied the Rat cheerfully. “They say, ‘*Why* can’t fellows be allowed to do what they like *when* they like and *as* they like, instead of other fellows sitting on banks and watching them all the time and making remarks and poetry and things about them? What *nonsense* it all is!’ That’s what the ducks say.”¹

IN the year 1720 there raged in Britain a curious epidemic of financial speculation and credulity, known as the “South Sea Bubble.” Companies were floated for every conceivable purpose, none being too fantastic to receive support: “for the assurance of seamen’s wages,” “for improving malt liquors,” “for planting of mulberry trees and breeding of silkworms in Chelsea Park,” “for fattening of hogs,” and “for importing a number of large jackasses from Spain, in order to propagate a larger breed of mules in England.” All these were given extensive financial support by the

¹ The quotations which head each chapter are all taken from the late Mr. Kenneth Grahame’s *The Wind in the Willows*, by kind permission of Mrs. Kenneth Grahame and Messrs. Methuen & Co., Ltd. I have no wish to inflict any political allegory on that charming fantasy; but perhaps Mr. Badger is the hero of this book as of *The Wind in the Willows*.

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amateur speculators of the time : so perhaps there was little need to import larger jackasses from Spain.

It may occur to the cynical observer that a selection of these schemes does not read very differently from some of the party programmes offered to the electorate by political parties in our democratic countries : projects which evoke still, curiously enough, the same credulous support.

But the gem of all the Bubble schemes was the formation of a company (and its shares too were bought) "for an undertaking which shall in due time be revealed." And this, it might be suggested, is not very remote from the programme presented by many of the Fascist parties in Europe to-day.

In short, however stupid political party programmes may seem to those who care to analyse them carefully, there are at least two kinds of them. There are those which may, indeed, strain the credulity of their supporters, yet which, at least, rely upon certain specious arguments and are an intelligent attempt to persuade the prospective client of their usefulness. (If they do occasionally resemble the claims made for the cure-all snake-oil offered by travelling quacks at country fairs, they, at least, involve a certain logical consistency of argument in their presentation.) And there are those which do not involve even this, but which depend entirely upon the complete credulity of their victims. It is possible (perhaps with an effort) to feel a certain sympathy with those who appreciate how desirable these advertised purposes are, however much we may regret their failure to consider the means by which such purposes could be achieved. But it is possible to feel only abject pity for those who lack even the shrewdness to inquire what the purposes may be.

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“We contend,” say the Luthinian People’s Front Republicans, “that more pigs should be reared in Luthinia ; that a trade agreement should be reached with Ruritania ; and that a policy of immediate disarmament should be carried out.” They may not say how they propose to market the pigs so reared, nor reveal the fact that Ruritania has no intention of making a trade agreement, however determined she may be to pursue her policy of big-scale rearmament. But they do commit themselves to the implication that they regard these objectives as honourable and worthy.

The National-Patriot Fascist Bloc in Ruritania, on the other hand, merely said at the last election (the last for all time), “Put us into power, and all your grievances shall be removed. We promise that you shall not be worried any more by problems of unemployment, agricultural depression, or collective security. Our Great Leader (Hail Graucho !) will, in due course, decide what must be done. So worry no more. Simply trust us with power, and you shall hear no more of these things.” A few years of power have proved them quite faithful to their promise. Their subjects have certainly heard no more about unemployment—except of its prevalence abroad. Agricultural depression, too, is unheard of : which is not to say that these things do not exist.

I do not pretend that this is an accurate account of either the Luthinian People’s Front Republicans or the Ruritanian National-Patriot Fascist Bloc ; still less, of course, of their counterparts in other countries. But it is, I believe, a true account of the sort of difference between them. There are some bubbles which are more transparent than others : those containing less soft-soap.

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It is a strange commentary on modern politics that when a citizen is about to invest his own money he normally sets about it with the greatest caution and circumspection, and studies with care the credentials of the company and its trustees. But when he is about to vote for a political party at an election, and thereby entrust to a particular body of men not only his own fortune but the machinery of his whole State and the happiness of himself and all his fellow-citizens, he does so in a most light-hearted and casual manner, inquiring seldom if ever into the credentials and suitability of the men who are to hold this mighty trust. There is a principle in commercial law known as *caveat emptor*—let the buyer beware, or he will be sold a pup. We have not yet learnt to apply this principle of individual responsibility to politics: though there is an old and hard saying, that every country gets the government it deserves.

It is the purpose of this little book to discuss—and to stimulate discussion of—the place of personality in politics. The intention is to consider not only the attitude with which the citizen does approach politics in the actual democratic and “single-party” States of the modern world, but also the attitude with which he ought to approach politics. It is not enough, as so many defenders of democracy seem to imply, for the majority of citizens to take an active interest in affairs of State. Indeed it can be argued, in the light of much experience in Europe since the War, that many of the political difficulties of our time have been added to, rather than solved, by the increased numbers of people who have been allowed to take an active interest in politics. For the advent of large electorates means the irruption of the well-meaning amateur into highly complicated matters

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of public policy ; and—just as in the 1720's it was the amateur, credulous, muddle-headed speculator who inflated the Bubbles until they burst—so in the 1920's (and 1930's) it is the amateur, credulous, muddle-headed citizen who has made the political world safe for gangsters, quacks, confidence-tricksters, and every other kind of crook with a purpose which “shall in due time be revealed.” It is not enough for everybody to meddle in politics. Everything depends upon the mental attitude with which they approach politics.

And so this book attempts to unravel the tangled connections between human personality and political activity—that is, between the character and ideas and opinions of you and me and Mr. Smith, and the things we read about in our newspapers, discuss in the train and the restaurant, and even vote upon when the next election comes round. These bewildering problems are, for the most part, created by people like us, and in a democratic form of government they are supposed, in the long run, to be settled by people like us. Certainly they very intimately concern people like us.

But it is not in any way intended that this book should develop into yet another homily to the citizen upon the extent of his duties and his rights. “The average citizen,” if such there be, must by now be very weary of being told what he must do to be saved. He may even have begun to suspect that if he does these things, whatever else is saved it will not be his money ; in which case he has perhaps already acquired one of the desirable characteristics of the good citizen. It is important that the citizen should know when to withhold or to withdraw his confidence : almost as important as that he should be *able* to withdraw his confidence, which is the

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one great fundamental right secured to him by a democratic system of laws.

At this point of the argument it is usual to pause, and to say something like this : " It needs, however, only a moment's thought to realize that although this right of the private citizen to give and withhold his support is, and should be, guaranteed by a free government, yet if all were to use this right separately and capriciously, organized government would clearly become impossible. Big organized political parties are therefore necessary, to amass public confidence and secure stable government." To this the answer, suggested and elaborated in this book, is " Don't believe it ! " Big organized parties may indeed be necessary in democracy. It will be argued that they are. But they are not made necessary by this reason.¹ And the citizen who, from mere party loyalty, goes on extending his support to a party of men in office although he thinks their measures bad, is doing the biggest disservice to democracy—and to himself. Elaborate party organization is necessary to put men into power, and to keep them there. Individual desertion, if extensive enough, is sufficient to withdraw them from power, and may be legitimately used to do so. A balance of the gain and loss involved in a change of government at any given moment may discourage change : but that is a different thing from subordinating individual judgment and conscience to party loyalty. Ultimately government is made possible at all only by bonds of trust between the men who are in power and the men who are subject to that power. The firmer these bonds, the more sensitive and responsive will be the administration to the needs of

¹ Organized parties are justified on *other* grounds below in Chapters IV. and V.

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the community. Political party is one means—perhaps the main means—of strengthening these bonds of trust. But, like most political institutions, it defeats its own ends if it becomes, by dint of exaggerated and misplaced devotion, an end in itself rather than a means.

All modern government is party government, in the sense of government by an organized body of men who are in general agreement upon some political issues. But there is a growing divergence between States which have a "party system" of one kind or another, and "single-party" States, which firmly suppress all attempts of their citizens to associate together into any political party other than the party which is in power. The United Kingdom, the self-governing Dominions, the United States of America, France, Belgium, Holland, Switzerland, the Scandinavian countries, and many others are still amongst the "party-system" States. Germany, Italy, the U.S.S.R., Turkey, and Japan are the most impressive of the "single-party" States. The "party-system" States are usually regarded as being on the defensive in these days, though precisely what that means will be considered in a later chapter.¹ It is easy to fall into a state of resignation and a mood of fatalism, which may not in this case be justified. Time may prove, in the long run, to be on the side of the party-system States. You cannot live for ever on guns instead of butter, and pig-iron instead of pigs. There is in economics a rule of currency known as "Gresham's Law," which states the general truth that debased coinage always tends to drive out good coinage. It has yet to be proved that there is a Gresham's Law of politics, whereby debased forms of government tend to drive out good forms.

¹ Chapter VIII.

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If there is, there is no hope for civilization ; for in all conscience there are enough debased forms of government in common currency to-day. It is in the belief that there is not a Gresham's Law of politics that this book is written. And it is as well that this be stated at the beginning, if only so that the reader may be forewarned, and know at what point he must reach forward for his pinch of salt, to adjust the flavour of the provender to his own taste.

Much confusion is caused by the claims of the " totalitarian " (or " all-in ") parties of these single-party States to be more truly " representative " of their nations than the more " sectional " parties of the democratic States.

For instance, Herr Hitler, in a speech at Frankfort in March 1936, said, " I have been told that I have done away with democracy. No. I have not done away with democracy, but only simplified it." Signor Mussolini, protesting against the " collective irresponsibility " of democracy, declares that Fascism may write itself down as " an organized, centralized and authoritative democracy." The new Soviet Constitution of 1936 was repeatedly declared by Stalin to be " the most democratic in the world " ; and English defenders of the Soviet system echo this claim. They claim that " the only effective democracy of the people must be a disciplined democracy," and that " in the Soviet State there has developed a one-party system. It arose as a result of the operation of the will of the vast majority of the people. It occurred democratically." ¹ It would seem, then, that every one is agreed that democracy is a good thing ; and it is a pity that we cannot agree more clearly as to just what democracy is, and to what point it can be simplified,

¹ Pat Sloan, *Soviet Democracy* (1937).

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organized, centralized, and disciplined without ceasing to be democracy. It is all very bewildering when every existing political system is crammed, rammed, jammed, and slammed inside this one great portmanteau-word, until it ceases to have any shape at all. I fear that it must be unpacked a little before we can continue our journey. It cannot be made even presentably tidy until the end of this book. But a few of the biggest encumbrances can perhaps be thrown out to begin with.

1. *Democracy does not ignore the natural differences of men*

It would be almost childish to attack the notion that the theory or practice of democracy takes for granted a dead level of similarity amongst men and women, were it not that this very notion is the ground of so many Fascist attacks against democracy. Mussolini, on his march to Rome in 1922, said, "Democratic equalitarianism, anonymous and grey, which forbade all colour and flattened every personality, is about to die." And in his official statement of Fascist doctrines he "affirms the immutable, beneficial and fruitful inequality of mankind, which can never be permanently levelled through the mere operation of a mechanical process such as universal suffrage." The principle of equality does not mean that all men should be alike. Equality is not similarity, and no democrat of repute ever suggested that it was.

Roughly speaking, the underlying idea of democracy, as it developed in England and America in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, is that all men are equal in the mystical sense that all pennies are equal. Some men, of course, are bright or dull, just as some pennies

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may be bright or dull. But all have, in the long run, an equal value ; for all pennies are stamped with the image of the king, just as all men bear the image of the King of kings.¹ The basis of modern ideas of democracy (as distinct from the "democratic" city-states of ancient Greece and Rome) is this religious and mystical concept. Its political expression is the belief that if all men are equal in the eyes of God, then all men should be equal before the Law : that is, that all men should enjoy an equality of freedom and self-expression. In the quaint words of a Puritan democrat, "the poorest he that is in England hath a life to live as the richest he." The cross-fertilizing of these two ideas of equality of value and freedom of expression produced the notion of "equality of opportunity." And the essence of this idea is—in political practice—freedom rather than similarity, for it means that all men must be free, even to become very unlike one another. This is what happened in the course of the French Revolution a century and a half ago. The old revolutionary war-cry of "Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity" became, in practice, the abolition of class privileges and the guarantee of "a career open to talents." The "poorest hes" wanted to live their own lives. They did not want to be standardized.²

2. Democracy is first and foremost a political method

To contrast "democracy" with "dictatorship" is not to contrast one kind of social life with another, or to con-

¹ I owe this analogy to the wit of Mr. G. K. Chesterton.

² One may be forgiven, perhaps, for echoing Mr. Chesterton's remark that if any one still cares to maintain that some men are bright and some dull, then I can only solemnly agree that some men *are*—very dull indeed.

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trast "liberty" with "equality." It is simply to distinguish one political method from another, one way of organizing political activity from another way. The intentions of the men who choose these different ways of arranging their political activity may in either case be the same. The aim of a dictatorship may be greater equality. In Russia the aim of the so-called "dictatorship of the proletariat" (or rather of the Communist Party on behalf of the proletariat) is to produce greater economic equality. Where the chief aim is to free a community from foreign control, either democracy or dictatorship may be used as a political method. In Europe in the last century the task of nationalist movements was to evoke widespread popular support, and therefore most Nationalists were also liberals and democrats. But in Germany, where the gaining of national independence and union needed more highly centralized control and the waging of war, men looked to monarchy and a strong executive for salvation. That belief persists in Germany to-day—and who shall say that it has not been justified ?

3. *Democracy as a political method means a process of discussion*

If each human personality has something in it of ultimate value, then each must be free to contribute what it can to the general political decisions of the community. This does not mean, of course, that each contribution will have the same value, nor even that some contributions will be worth anything at all. But *the only way to find out* is to receive all available contributions, and let

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them sort themselves out. In order to reach the rough-and-ready decisions which are needed to carry on government at all, these personal contributions have to be organized and roughly sorted out beforehand if they are effectively to influence decisions in time. This is the task of an organized political party. Clearly, there would need to be a remarkable degree of unanimity or conformity for one party to be able to do all this work properly. The democrat suspects that this would lead simply to enforcing conformity rather than producing unanimity. That is why he believes in a party system.

There is no need to ignore the great drawbacks of the party system. It is often a clumsy, ponderous piece of political machinery. But some form of party system is the unavoidable result of recognizing the rights of human personality : the rights to express itself as freely as possible, to associate with kindred spirits, and by free discussion between human beings to reach some practical decision which can subsequently be adopted in action.

And so it can be said that the idea at the root of the democratic method is not only "equality of opportunity," but also liberty ; indeed, the two can scarcely be separated. The outward and visible signs of a democratic system are certain guarantees of political freedom—security of open discussion, freedom of speech and the Press, the existence of a parliament of popular representatives elected without bribery or intimidation, and of an executive answerable in the long run to this parliament. The emphasis all the time is on the personal rights of the ordinary citizen. In a dictatorship, on the other hand, the emphasis all the time is on the privileges of the members of the one great party which identifies itself with the State, and, indeed, with the community as a

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whole ; on the moral character of the party hierarchy, and especially of the great Leader himself. The prime reality in a modern dictatorship is not the personality of the ordinary citizen, but the State, as a whole, and its "embodiment" in the dominating personality of the great Leader. Here the penny citizen, there the sovereign State. The dictator believes that the democracies are penny wise and pound foolish. The democrat believes that if you take care of the pennies, the sovereigns will take care of themselves.

From this brief unpacking of the word "democracy" as applied to modern political constitutions there emerges one persistent underlying fact. When all trimmings and outer coverings have been taken away, the real division between the two kinds of States is a difference of idea as to the part which individual personality should play in politics. The nature of this difference and its actual manifestations in the modern world are the theme of this "Discussion Book." Certainly, if this difference is real, there can be few subjects more worth while discussing.

Nor need we become involved in any elaborate discussion of the meaning of "personality." The two main meanings given by the Oxford English Dictionary are these :

1. The quality, character, or fact of being a person as distinct from a thing. . . .

2. That quality, or assemblage of qualities, which make a person what he is, as distinct from other persons ; distinctive personal or individual character. . . .

The word is used in this book in this quite simple, everyday sense, as the combination of those distinctive qualities which make one human being different from all things, and from all other human beings.

CHAPTER II

HEROES AND HERO-WORSHIP

“ You see, he will insist on driving himself, and he’s hopelessly incapable. If he’d only employ a decent, steady well-trained animal, pay him good wages, and leave everything to him, he’d get on all right. But no ; he’s convinced he’s a heaven-born driver, and nobody can teach him anything ; and all the rest follows.”

AT this stage our subject can perhaps be made clearer if we state a general proposition, such as is usually made by the proposer of a debate. We may say, then :

“ That social and political institutions grow and develop by the interaction of institution and personality, the impersonal and the personal in politics ; that is, by the process of individual personality adjusting laws and customs and existing institutions to new needs.”

We may now examine how far this generalization is, in fact, borne out by the evidence at our disposal. And in this way it may be possible to evaluate the place of heroes and leaders in politics.

The simplest and perhaps the most primitive example of this relationship between personality and politics is the great lawgiver.

“ And the Lord said unto Moses, Come up to me into the mount, and be there : and I will give thee tables of

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stone, and a law, and commandments which I have written ; that thou mayest teach them." The law and the prophets are usually inseparable. The semi-divine lawgiver plays a large part in all ancient history. More than two thousand years before Christ, the Babylonian King Hammurabi was justly famous for the great code of laws, supposed to have been given to him by the sun-god Shamash. The organization embodied in the laws of Hammurabi made Babylon the political and intellectual centre of Western Asiatic history until the Christian era. The city of ancient Athens is inseparably connected with the name of Solon, just as the constitution of Sparta is linked with the name of Lycurgus. Solon (638-558 B.C.) was given the office of Archon, with unlimited powers, which he used for economic and constitutional reforms so extensive and so lasting that he laid the foundations of Athenian democracy and most of its later development. The semi-mythical Lycurgus likewise was credited with having founded the constitution of Sparta, which he was supposed to have learnt from the Delphic oracle. To derive a political constitution from one great person in this way—especially if the origins can also be claimed as semi-divine—gives it a unity and vitality which it could scarcely get in any other way.

Nor, of course, are the great lawgivers confined to ancient times. In the sixteenth century John Calvin was entrusted with the task of reorganizing the constitution of the city of Geneva. The system of laws which he prepared embodied his whole theological outlook—his conception of a State which is also a Church, with no real distinction between civil and ecclesiastical power, whose purpose is to secure the reign of righteousness

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on earth. The laws are stamped with the personality of Calvin—logical, stern, austere ; and they were rigidly enforced. “ It would take gods to give men laws ” was the shrewd comment of another citizen of Geneva two hundred years later. And this man—Jean Jacques Rousseau—devotes a special chapter of his famous work on *The Social Contract* to a description of the nature of “ the lawgiver.” The legislator, being outside the laws he makes, must appeal to some external authority. “ This,” says Rousseau, “ is what has, in all ages, compelled the fathers of nations to have recourse to divine intervention and credit the gods with their own wisdom, in order that the people, submitting to the laws of the state as to those of Nature, and recognizing the same power in the formation of the city as in that of man, might obey freely, and bear with docility the yoke of the public happiness.” But, as he is careful to point out, “ the great soul of the legislator is the only miracle that can prove his mission ” ; it is his personality that matters most. And we must afterwards admire “ in the institutions they set up, the great and powerful genius which presides over things made to endure.” Rousseau himself drew up constitutions for Corsica and Poland. They remained paper schemes.

In more recent times, we have seen Thomas Masaryk, the philosopher, create for his beloved Czech nation a new state, with a new constitution based on his own philosophical principles of freedom and democracy ; we have seen him, as its President, guide it safely through the difficulties of applying these principles in practice ; and we have seen it eventually destroyed by the armed might of its Nazi neighbour.

Closely akin to the lawgiver who first formulates and

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gives the power of his personality to the laws is the codifier who fuses and simplifies existing laws into an organized systematic code. The greatest of these was the Byzantine Emperor Justinian. The Roman law, as he received it from his predecessors in the sixth century, was an enormous mass of precedents and piecemeal decisions, often contradictory and out-of-date. The growth of Christianity within the Roman Empire had introduced new moral ideas, and these were embedded in new laws side by side with five centuries of non-Christian laws. Justinian's *Institutes* and *Pandects* were the last great revision of Roman law and the starting-point of all legal study in Europe. Decay and disorder followed his reign, but his work had been well done. Justinian and justice became difficult to think of apart. Roman law survived the barbarian invasions, and Justinian remains for lawyers the father of European law.

On a smaller scale the codification of French law by Napoleon has proved to be the one permanent part of his work. The *Code Napoléon*, drawn up in 1801, has survived four revolutions, and remains to this day the basis of French justice and much French administration. It has been remarked that none of his other works bear so markedly the imprint of his forceful personality. Its defects are the defects of Napoleon—excessively centralized control and a general inflexibility.

At the same time, in England, the philosopher Jeremy Bentham was evolving the principles and generating the "drive" necessary to rationalize and codify English law. Most of the legal and political reforms of the last century owe something to the work of Bentham and his followers. To Bentham we even owe the word

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“codification.” All these reforms—extensions of the right to vote, Toleration Acts, mitigation of the poor law and the criminal code, improvements in the rules of evidence and judicial procedure—are marked by the famous Benthamite principle that the aim of law is to promote “the greatest happiness of the greatest number.” Behind them all stands the kindly humane figure which you may still see in University College, London.

Lawgivers and those who have codified existing laws provide, as we have seen, examples of the direct influence of human personality upon political institutions. The initial inspiration and impetus, coming from a single great man, give vigour and vitality to the institutions, which are coloured by his character. The process of *interaction* between persons and politics may be better illustrated, however, by considering the institution of kingship.

The history of the Holy Roman Empire and the Papacy in the Middle Ages constantly offers striking examples of how much the meaning and importance of even the mightiest offices depend upon the character of the man who holds them. The theory was that Christendom was one united Commonwealth with two governments, the spiritual and the temporal, the Papacy and the Empire. Both claimed universal dominion ; and how far either was able to turn this claim into a fact depended largely upon the character of the particular Pope or Emperor. Both thrones were in themselves awe-inspiring, but both were without precise meaning in practical politics apart from the personality of the men who sat on them. For not only were they rivals of one another in certain issues, but both had to contend

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with powerful feudal nobles and national kings. A Gregory VII. and an Innocent III. could make the most far-reaching claims for their holy office, and infuse enough vigour into their policy to get these claims accepted in practice. Likewise a Henry IV. or a Frederick Barbarossa could stand out, during their lifetime, as vivid symbols of the glory of Empire and the unity of Christendom. But a weak Pope or an unimpressive Emperor could reduce the functions of their offices to mere routine. Without constant appeals to the imagination of men the throne of St. Peter, and still more the throne of Charlemagne, very quickly became tarnished in their glory. Such appeals could be made only by the striking personality of a great man.

The same tendency can be seen in the history of the French monarchy. Its first flush of real glory came from the universal respect accorded to the high moral character of St. Louis (Louis IX., 1215-70). The institutions of a strong national monarchy had been set up by his predecessors, but they were developed under Louis, and acquired that general acceptance which was vital for their growth. They were accepted as right because the king himself was righteous; though it became apparent under his less worthy successors that the same institutions could be used for extortion as well as for justice, if the king himself were not so moderate, so pious, or so wise.

The climax of the glory of the monarchy of France came with Louis XIV.—the Sun King, *le Grand Monarque*. A contemporary said of him that if he were not the greatest king, yet he was certainly the greatest “actor of majesty” there had ever been. By foreign conquests, domination of Europe, patronage of the arts, and sheer

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personal magnificence, Louis contrived to fascinate men by the great glory of his office. It was monarchy he glorified more than himself, and he enhanced the whole institutional development by his own personality. He really believed that nothing could be more exalted than the office of a king. "There are certain of our functions," he declared, "in which we so to speak take the place of God." He turned a political necessity into an artistic opportunity. He realized the dramatic possibilities of his office, studied the technique of royalty, and was careful to strike the right postures. Indeed, had the monarchy of Louis remained less a personal triumph and institutionalized itself more, it might have been better for France. The old feudal privileges remained side by side with the centralizing agencies of the Crown, and it needed a French Revolution two generations later to sweep them away.

Nevertheless, centralization was organized well enough to give France an absolute monarchy. In England this did not happen, and even in Norman England the government was too personal to be absolute. William the Conqueror was careful to claim every right he could to justify his kingship, but clearly he held it, ultimately, by right of conquest. To that extent it was a personal right. And although he left to those who succeeded him a powerful throne, it was not much more than a century after his death that John was forced to sign Magna Carta, destroying for ever a royal absolutism in England.

Even more interesting is the basis of the Tudor monarchy. Deriving their power partly from a general boredom with civil war, partly from the growing economic prosperity of the country, the Tudors yet owed

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most of their strength to their popularity, and this in turn was derived from their own personalities. Henry VIII. embodied just that spirit of nationalist Catholic anti-clericalism, which was shared by most Englishmen of the time. His vigorous, versatile, boisterous personality was in harmony with the age. His daughter, Elizabeth, had just the combination of slow cunning and shrewd common sense which enabled her to steer a path of steady compromise between the fanatical extremes of her time. Indeed, much of the trouble of those unhappy Scotsmen, James I. and Charles I., was due to their inability to fill the rôle which the peculiar genius of Elizabeth had accustomed Englishmen to expect from their monarch. The point has been well expressed by Professor J. E. Neale. "Converting her reign, through the perpetual love-tricks that passed between her and her people, into a kind of romance, she made of the Crown in Parliament a rôle which no man could have played (unless perhaps it had been her father), and trained an audience which, if sometimes barely tolerant of herself, would be charmed by no other. She passed away—the glorious but involuntary betrayer of the cause of monarchy."

Since the time of Elizabeth the growth of our political institutions has been constantly affected by the virtues or the incapacities of our monarchs. The persistence of James II., the stubbornness of Queen Anne, the linguistic defects of George I., the foreign interests of George II., the pig-headedness and even the madness of George III., the rakishness of George IV.—all these characteristics have notoriously, in their turn, contributed something to the growth of our Constitution. In yet later days the prejudices and mere longevity of Queen Victoria, the

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painstaking industriousness of Albert, the foreign diplomacy of Edward VII., and the patient conscientiousness of George V., have likewise afforded countless examples of the importance of personal characteristics in even the most "limited" of monarchies. Indeed, it may well be that a limited monarchy demands more rare personal qualities than does absolute monarchy.

And this development of the monarchy in Britain has been a process of constant adjustment to changing needs ; on the one hand to the needs of Cabinet-government, the increase in power of the Prime Minister, and the rise of a party system ; on the other hand to the needs of a new Commonwealth of Nations within the Empire—a Commonwealth looking to the King-Emperor rather than to Parliament as the natural symbol of its common loyalties. The monarchy has most skilfully used every modern means of filling its rôle as a bond of national and imperial unity, and as an agency of goodwill in foreign diplomacy. The broadcasts by the King and periodic tours both at home and abroad have become a permanent and valuable feature of political life. The recent visit of the King and Queen to France was only a further development of the same tendency. The dictators of Italy and Germany have not been slow to appreciate and utilize the value of personal visits to one another. There seems to be an inherent need in modern politics for more and more "state occasions."

It may be useful to pause at this stage of the argument and survey the road along which it has led us. We have discovered from history that there are at least three direct ways in which human personality interacts with political institutions. These are :

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1. In the form of the semi-divine or legendary law-giver, a founder or prophet who equips a State with its first complete set of laws and its fundamental constitution : a Moses, Solon, or Lycurgus.

2. In the form of the great codifier of laws who reduces existing laws and customs to a system, and in so doing stamps his own personality upon them : a Justinian, Napoleon, or Jeremy Bentham.

3. In the form of a great Pope or Emperor or King—who acquires an office already great, but who enhances and exalts it by his own personality and achievements : a Gregory VII., a Frederick Barbarossa, a St. Louis, or a Queen Elizabeth.

In each of these ways political institutions may be given a twist or a bias by the idiosyncrasy of a particular man or woman, which means that they may never again function in quite the same way. All the States of the world bear upon them marks of the impress made by “striking” personality.

At this point there is a temptation to go on to argue that the driving force of all change—either for good or ill—is derived from great men, and that to refuse wide discretionary powers to the leader is to handicap progress and produce stagnation. Enterprise, initiative, and invention must all come from the natural leaders of men, and the best that the majority of men can do is to follow their lead, and to see that they labour under no unnecessary checks or handicaps. There is a temptation to argue in this way ; but it is necessary to resist this temptation, for it is based upon a confusion of thought. It is true that all enterprise, initiative, and invention are derived from the genius of *the individual*—but of which

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individual ? If the beliefs of democracy were correctly analysed above, then *any* individual is liable to have some contribution of value which he can make to the decision of public affairs ; and the only way to find out the value of any contribution is to accept them all. And can this be reconciled with a system which allows wide powers of discretion to its great leaders ? How did these men become “ great leaders ” ? By the value of their contribution to the general decision, or by hereditary succession, or by being more ruthless and bloodthirsty than rival leaders, or by organizing their followers into a more efficient army than any one else ? These are questions which one must answer before rejecting all the value to be derived from the personality of the ordinary citizen, in favour of the “ progress ” (or is it only “ change ” ?) made possible by leaving all decisions of importance to a great leader.

A century ago John Stuart Mill wrote these famous words, which I make no apology for quoting once again. The belief which they embody is of more urgent importance in the world to-day than ever before :

“ All government which aims at being good is an organization of some part of the good qualities existing in the individual members of the community for the conduct of its collective affairs. A representative constitution is a means of bringing the general standard of intelligence and honesty existing in the community, and the individual intellect and virtue of its wisest members, more directly to bear upon the government. . . . The greater the amount of these good qualities which the institutions of a country succeed in organizing, and the

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better the mode of organization, the better will be the government.”¹

This is the basic belief of democracy, and the essential aim of all political arrangements concerned with the better “representation” of public opinion. It is an aim which involves a party system of one kind or another. This book will not attempt, therefore, to draw up any fanciful “ideal” constitution, but will try rather to describe the various ways in which nations in the modern world have contrived to achieve this aim. It is an aim, too, which does not eliminate the element of discretionary power in government. Men who have confidence in their representatives will be prepared to trust them in many ways, and will give them a free hand to settle many of the minor matters of administration. Such trust is a vital part of any government. But it is the limits of this trust which are all-important. The positive task of democratic politics is to “organize the general standard of intelligence and honesty existing in the community.” Its negative task is to devise political arrangements such as will make its government regularly and systematically responsible to public opinion. If either task is neglected, democracy is frustrated. It will therefore also be the purpose of the chapters that follow to examine the “limits of trust” imposed by various constitutions at the present time.

But before proceeding with that purpose, it is useful to recall the chief reasons hitherto put forward in favour of allowing unlimited discretion to government. These may be classified roughly as mystical, social, moral, technical, and economic reasons.

¹ *Representative Government.*

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I. *Mystical Reasons*

An impressive central figure may be valued as a symbol of the continuity and unity of the community. This was the real meaning behind all arguments for the Divine Right of Kings and hereditary succession. The larger the State or the Empire becomes, the more the need is felt for some strong personal bond of common loyalty. In the modern British Empire, this has been supplied by the great figure of the King-Emperor. In the ancient Roman Empire, it took the form of Emperor-worship—a definite religious cult, expressing the mystical unity of the whole Empire. In the Holy Roman Empire, the arguments for a strong central monarchy were set forth by Dante (*De Monarchia*). He declared that it was a part of God's purpose that humanity should resemble Himself by being unified, which it can only be when subjected to one universal monarchy.

2. *Social Reasons*

This is essentially the argument indicated above, that some men are born to rule, and most men are fit only to obey. It is the justification of all aristocracy. Plato, in his *Republic*, gave this reason eternal expression in his arguments for a class of specialized rulers—"philosopher-kings"—whose function in the community is to govern, just as the function of soldiers is to fight, and of workers to produce wealth. They must therefore be given unrestricted power. Nietzsche developed the idea further, in his cult of the "Superman," and Carlyle produced an

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English version of the same idea in his *Heroes and Hero-Worship*. Modern Fascism and Nazism have used the ideas of Plato to justify their party hierarchy and their submission to a great Leader. Pareto, for example, adapted the notion of government by an *élite* to the needs of Mussolini, and Hitler declares in *Mein Kampf* that "there must be no majority making decisions, but merely a body of responsible persons."

3. *Moral Reasons*

These are often closely linked with 2 above. It may be said that when public spirit and patriotism have declined too far, the State can be rejuvenated only by the moral ascendancy of a Patriot Prince. This was the argument of Niccolo Machiavelli in his *Prince*: for although he justified any action of the Prince as right, yet the real usefulness of the Patriot Prince lay in his serving a "higher" moral purpose—the strength and independence and welfare of the State—and the Prince must always *appear* virtuous, even when he is not. Lord Bolingbroke produced an English version of this idea, which he called *The Idea of a Patriot King*. Therein he declared his belief that "a corrupt people, whom the law cannot correct, may be restrained and corrected by a kingly power"; but he insisted that the king must really be virtuous, and that the mere appearance of patriotism is not enough.

4. *Technical Reasons*

These are the most common arguments for allowing government a free hand—significantly called "a doctor's

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mandate." They may often be completely justified—such, for example, as the need for strong, centralized control in time of war or other urgent national emergency. The Roman Republic of the fifth century before Christ made special provision for the granting of emergency powers ; the original *Dictator* was an extraordinary, but perfectly legal, officer of the Republic. He was legally invested with his great power for a period of six months or less, and had to cope with a crisis, either abroad in the form of delicate negotiation, or at home in the form of civil war. The most obvious analogy is the autocratic power invested in the captain of a ship—and is indeed the recognition that " we are all in the same boat," and some one has to take immediate decision if we are to be saved from shipwreck. Despotism is often urged as the only alternative to the greater evil of anarchy ; this was the argument of Thomas Hobbes, the English philosopher of the seventeenth century. " And though," he said, " of so unlimited a Power, men may fancy many evil consequences, yet the consequences of the want of it, which is perpetual war of every man against his neighbour, are much worse."

5. *Economic Reasons*

This is the main reason put forward by the modern Communist to justify his Party's dictatorship in Russia. It is akin to the " social reasons " above, justifying government by an *élite*. To allow any opposition, it is said, would be only to provide a rallying point for all the opposing elements in the class war. Mr. Pat Sloan, for instance, writes of an opposition, " It would be the

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resort of every remnant of opposition to the working-class movement of the Soviet Union. Ex-employers and ex-opponents of the system, agents of foreign Powers and people who were under their influence—all the social undesirables would flock round such an organization in order to discredit the Soviet Government and to impede the progress which it is making.”¹ Organization, therefore, must be a monopoly of the party in power. In short, dictatorship is a concomitant of the “Experimental State.” Here the argument merges into “technical reasons” and the creed of “emergency measures.”

It should be noted that these justifications of irresponsible government range from reasons which would justify perpetual despotism—such as the Divine Right of Kings and the desire for government by an *élite*—to more guarded justification of temporary or limited grants of “irresponsibility” to government. We shall have occasion to refer to these more than once in the pages that follow. But meanwhile some attempt must be made to describe the nature of the chief enemy of all these—the idea of a party system—and to trace its development in England, the land of its birth.

¹ *Soviet Democracy*, p. 218.

CHAPTER III

HOW ENGLAND GOT A PARTY SYSTEM

“They argued from history,” continued the Rat. “They said that no criminal laws had ever been known to prevail against cheek and plausibility such as yours, combined with the power of a long purse. . . . They didn’t guess what was going to happen, of course : still, they had their suspicions of the Wild Wood animals.”

THE British Constitution is still, in form, a “limited monarchy.” That phrase is significant. How does a monarchy become “limited” in this way—limited, that is, until it becomes a parliamentary democracy ? The British Constitution offers particularly clear illustrations of the general proposition which we are discussing—that political institutions “grow” by the interaction of the personal and the impersonal.

There has been a lot of controversy amongst historians as to the exact meaning which ought to be attached to the words, “the feudal system.” Some have declared that it was introduced into England by William the Conqueror. Others have hastened to point out that some arrangements very like feudalism already existed amongst the Anglo-Saxons in England before the Conquest. Others have suggested, more skittishly, that the feudal system was really introduced into England by the seventeenth-century historian, Sir Henry Spelman. It is enough for our purpose to remark that, in general, in

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England of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, it was assumed that all land was held directly or indirectly from the king, who was the owner of it; that there was, or should be, no land without a lord; and that from every piece of land some feudal service was due to some one. All lordship was landlordship. It was a political system of peculiarly *personal* relationships. The tenant owed his lord service, which might be military or economic. He submitted to his lord's jurisdiction. He had to make contributions when his lord's eldest son was made a knight, or when his eldest daughter got married. If his lord was captured, he had to contribute to the ransom. In return the lord was expected to protect his tenant, guarantee his tenure of land, and afford general security. It was a system of politics based upon personal bargains or contracts, although in course of time these contracts became implicit rather than explicit, and on the whole it was easier for the lord than for his tenant to break the contract with impunity. This system also governed the relationship between the great landlords and the king. And that is the first means by which the king could be "limited."

In theory, the feudal king was limited by the obligations of the supposed feudal contract. He was expected to conform to the recognized customs which governed the relationship of overlord and vassal. He must respect the rights of jurisdiction held by the nobles—he must extract no dues which were "undue."

In practice, he was limited by the likelihood that if he disregarded their privileges, his vassals would throw off their allegiance to him, and might even wage war against him in the last resort. The ultimate "sanction" was rebellion. And so the actual power of a feudal king

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depended upon the personality of the king himself. A shrewd, capable monarch like Henry II. could make great inroads into the privileges of the nobility. In establishing royal supremacy over the barons, he modified the arbitrary rule of the barons over their own subjects ; by offering forms of "king's justice" which were quicker or cheaper than baronial justice, he undercut the powers of the nobles. But less able successors alienated the support he enlisted in this way. It became obvious that "if the first condition of progress was the restraint of the barons, the second was the curbing of the crown." ¹

When the violent greed of John had united all parts of the feudal system against him, it became plain that the ultimate limitation on the king was the likelihood of rebellion. The Great Charter (1215) was extorted from him by force, and its lasting importance is that it acknowledged and embodied in institutional form this ultimate sanction of revolt. It was not, as it was for so long assumed to be, a democratic document. It was primarily an aristocratic document, guaranteeing the feudal privileges and "liberties" of the feudal system. It is a general warning to all kings that English nobles expect every king to do his duty ; which is to refrain from arbitrary taxation, to respect established privileges, and to conform respectably to the established customs of the State. The famous "sanctions" article (61) set up a sort of watch-committee of twenty-five barons to see that the king kept his side of the agreement. If other pressure failed, these barons were empowered to raise insurrection against the king.

And so the sovereign power in England—that is, the

¹ Professor A. F. Pollard, *The History of England*, p. 52. A valuable, concise review of the evolution of English institutions.

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body recognized as having the last word in decisions of government—came to be not the king alone, but the King in his Council, with the Council holding an ultimate threat of force over the king. In the course of time other elements were more and more regularly included—lesser nobles, and even representatives of the shires and boroughs. The general term “parliament”—a coming together for a talk—was applied to these wider gatherings in council. These other elements even came to hold, as it were, the balance of power between the king and the greater nobles. And so the king in the later Middle Ages governed “in his Council in his Parliament,” as the saying went. That is the reason why lawyers to-day say that Parliament is the sovereign power in the British Constitution ; for Parliament is taken to mean King, Lords, and Commons acting together.

There is one very curious fact to be noticed about all this development. We tend to think of a centralized power as being also an irresponsible power. But our own history shows the opposite to be true. When power was split up amongst the great feudal nobles, it was used arbitrarily and often irresponsibly. In Britain, power has been made responsible *by being centralized*. In France, the government became irresponsible because it was not centralized enough. In Britain, the stronger the central power wanted to become, the more it needed the co-operation of the important men. The more their co-operation was needed, the more they were able to bargain with—and even to browbeat—the king. Thus in the long run they could control him, and he was to that extent regularly “limited.”

The French monarchy became irresponsible mainly because so many intermediate powers existed between the

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king and the people ; the more that power was diffused throughout the State, the wider the powers of discretion and the greater the trust that had to be allowed to the central authority, to enable it to curb and co-ordinate these various powers. Diffused force produces irresponsible power. Centralized power tends to eliminate the use of force. In Britain, liberty grew with the growth of a central power which had no rival power to fear.

The explanation of this paradox is, of course, that this central power in England was, from a very early stage, not a single but a composite power. It was, as we have seen, the "King in his Council in his Parliament." The great underlying truism of our history is that it is the important men who matter. The king could curb their local powers only by taking them into partnership with himself in the central power. And this process continued when the important men ceased to be only the greater nobles, and included also the representatives of wealthy boroughs which paid a large part of the taxes, and knights of the shire who represented the wealthy agricultural classes.

Henry VIII. and Elizabeth—having no large standing army, but only the national militia ; no police force, except Dogberry and Verges ; no civil service, save Justice Shallow and his like—were entirely dependent upon the willing support of the trading classes and the country gentry. The squabbling feudal nobles had destroyed most of their power—and, indeed, most of themselves—by the dreary Wars of the Roses. So the Tudor monarchs were essentially middle class rulers, in the strict sense of the words. They ruled through the middle classes. The local Justice of the Peace was the same sort

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of man (often precisely the same man) as the Member of Parliament. The king could wage war, administer justice, collect taxes, break with the Roman Church, only with the co-operation of his J.P.s and his M.P.s. Because the power of these men was concentrated in Parliament, the Tudors had not only to preserve the form of Parliament, but to respect its substance too. They were limited by the need to take the middle classes into partnership with them in the central government, just as the feudal kings had been limited by the need to take the great nobles into partnership with them. And by consistently using Parliament they gave it a great sense of continuity, importance, and power. They very skilfully rode a hobby-horse which was liable to bolt when ridden by less tactful men, like the Stuarts.

From the long struggles between Stuart kings and Parliament in the seventeenth century, one general truth dawned upon the minds of men. It was that if the king was to be satisfactorily "limited" and made systematically responsible to public opinion, as represented in Parliament, some regular, institutional means had to be found of ensuring this. The Stuarts had shown that it was not enough to rely upon the personal goodwill of the king—that a king who was a Papist, or for some other reason out of general sympathy with English public opinion, could still, by the wide discretionary powers left to him, cause bitter civil strife and endanger the whole Constitution. Men believed that there were certain "fundamental" laws which governed the existence of the whole community, and to these the king was subject no less than his people. Under the guidance of great lawyers like Sir Edward Coke, the common law of England—founded on custom, precedent, and judicial

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decisions—came to be identified for practical purposes with this so-called “fundamental law.” The problem was to establish “the rule of law”; for the impersonal rule of law was the only real safeguard against the personal arbitrariness of the executive government. Charles I. had his head cut off because he was judged to have violated this fundamental law of the realm. The Protectorate of Oliver Cromwell failed to establish itself because it was based ultimately upon success in the Civil War, and not upon “the rule of law.” And the Restoration of Charles II. in 1660 was essentially a return to government by law. The impersonal triumphed over the personal elements in political arrangements. “Impositions, ship-money, and other taxation derived from the Prerogative remained henceforth illegal. The names of benevolence and forced loan disappear from constitutional history. Apart from his hereditary revenues, the king had no means of financing his government other than those provided, permanently or temporarily, by Parliament. . . . Arbitrary rule was no longer possible to a king who could neither legislate nor tax out of Parliament, nor do justice outside the Courts of Common Law and Chancery.”¹

The bloodless (and therefore “Glorious”) Revolution of 1688, which began with the flight of James II. and ended with the safe enthronement of the Dutchman William on the throne of England, marked the final triumph of Parliament over the king. It did not, however, involve the equally systematic subjection of the Parliament to public opinion. And so the wealthy

¹ D. L. Keir, *The Constitutional History of Modern Britain*, p. 230. This is the best single-volume work which traces the growth of our political institutions to recent times.

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aristocracy who now controlled the king through Parliament in a regular, institutional way were able to control Parliament by managing the electorate. They were even able to use royal patronage to help them in this procedure, and their regular methods were bribery, jobbery, corruption, and the judicious distribution of government money and offices. The medieval process had now reversed itself, and it became obvious that "if the first condition of progress was the curbing of the Crown, the second was the restraint of the barons." The personal was again triumphing over the impersonal element in our political arrangements. The personal, irresponsible power of wealthy men—a Duke of Newcastle, a Duke of Bedford—could in turn be restrained only by some impersonal, systematic constitutional arrangement. Aristocratic influence had to be made subject to public opinion. Precisely how this was to be achieved long puzzled the ingenuity of men. Many different schemes were proposed before an adequate answer was found. The device which gave the desired effect was, of course, a party system, based upon free popular election. It was England which first discovered this device; and representative government, working through a party system, is the unique, original contribution of England to the science of politics.

The real continuity of development in British history has often been noted. Modern historians tend to emphasize this continuity even more strongly than their predecessors. The comparatively sudden changes of 1066 and 1485 have been smoothed out, and the underlying continuity has been revealed. The chief explanation of this is, I think, the process outlined above. Institutions have been retained whenever possible, and

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carefully and gradually adapted to new needs. The constant interaction of personal power and impersonal organization has prevented sudden disruptive change. The persistent process has been for persons already in power to take into partnership with them other classes, whose co-operation was necessary in government. The feudal king co-opted his greater nobles; they in turn co-opted the lesser nobles, burgesses, and knights of the shire. When the greater nobles had been eliminated, the Tudor king co-opted the wealthy middle classes. When the political power of the king had been broken, the new aristocracy of wealth co-opted the commercial classes again. Finally, in the course of the last century, the commercial classes co-opted the artisan and working classes, by granting them votes. And throughout the whole process the tendency has been for the senior member in each of these new partnerships to become a sleeping partner. The predominant power, the active government, have gone to the junior partner. So it has come about that without violent interruption of growth the feudal monarchy has become the limited, constitutional monarchy of to-day, and Britain has become a representative parliamentary democracy.

British experience suggests, then, that there are two ways in which political power can be restrained. It can be restrained by the personal, unsystematic method of personal resistance, involving in the last resort the threat of armed rebellion. This is a primitive, revolutionary method, liable to abuse, rough and ready in its working, yet the ultimate sanction of all political arrangements. But power can also be restrained by the systematic method of impersonal institutions and laws, involving a careful balance of powers, an organized check on

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arbitrary inclinations. In the development of British institutions both methods have been used.

The Americans, having used the first to throw off what they regarded as the arbitrary rule of George III. and the British Parliament, favoured the second when they came to draw up their new Federal Constitution in 1787. President, Senate, Congress, and Supreme Court were intended as a system of mutual checks and balances, and the general aim was so to separate the powers of government that, in the words of the old Massachusetts Constitution, "we may have a government of laws and not of men." The aim was the rule of law—which meant freedom from arbitrary interference by officials, equality of all before the law, and the equal application of the same law to the whole territory of the nation. It was, of course, unduly optimistic to hope for a "government of laws and not of men," for all governments must consist of men, just as all laws have to be formulated, interpreted, and applied by men. But the way to reconcile the impersonal rule of law with its personal administration by men had not yet been worked out.

The solution was to be found eventually in a system of freely organized political parties. But at the end of the eighteenth century party was distrusted, and the idea of a party system was imperfectly understood, both in Britain and in America. Englishmen, with memories of the bitter faction fights of the Civil War still comparatively fresh in their minds, never tired of condemning the activities of parties, and this feeling was shared by most of the democratic leaders in America. "If I could not go to heaven but with a party," declared Thomas Jefferson, "I would not go there at all." George Washington regarded party as fatal to the rule of law. "All obstruc-

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tions to execution of the laws, all combinations and associations under whatever plausible character, with the real design to direct, control, counteract, or awe the regular deliberations of the constituted authorities, are destructive of this fundamental principle and of fatal tendency." ¹

Americans, therefore, wanted their government to be as impersonal as possible. In England, on the other hand, there was a wide difference of opinion. The majority of the Whigs, who had pledged themselves by the Glorious Revolution to the principle of personal resistance, now found it difficult to condemn further personal resistance to government when they themselves were in power. The Tories, joined in opposition by those disgruntled Whigs who were excluded from office, could avoid the accusation of factiousness only by accusing the ministerial Whigs of unnecessary exclusiveness. There was a constant tendency for the opposition, in the first half of the eighteenth century, to appeal for what was called a Broad-Bottom administration—a ministry comprising the most valuable elements of all parties.

¹ Here are Benjamin Franklin's "Observations on my reading history, May 19, 1731," quoted in his *Autobiography*.

"That the great affairs of the world, the wars, revolutions, etc. are carried on and affected by parties.

That the view of these parties is their present general interest or what they take to be such.

That the different views of these parties occasion all confusion.

That while a party is carrying on a general design, each man has his own particular interest in view.

That as soon as the party has gained its general point, each member becomes intent upon his particular interest; which, thwarting others, breaks the party into divisions, and occasions more confusion.

That few in public affairs act from a mere view of the good of their country, whatever they may pretend; and tho' their actings bring real good to their country, yet men primarily considered that their own and their country's interest were united, and did not act from a principle of benevolence.

That fewer still in public affairs, act with a view to the good of mankind."

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This tendency meant, clearly, greater emphasis on the personal nature of administration. Alexander Pope expressed the general attitude of opposition when he wrote :

*For forms of government let fools contest,
Whate'er is best administer'd is best.*

And so, in the first half of the century, there were three sets of ideas as to the proper relationship between party and government. The ministerial Whigs—Walpole, the Duke of Newcastle, his brother Henry Pelham, and Lord Hardwicke—thought of a ministry as embodying the organized influence of a majority of the great Whig land-owning families who had made the Revolution of 1688. The Protestant Hanoverian Succession still had to be protected against attack from Jacobites and Popery—as was shown by the revolts of “The Fifteen” and “The Forty-five.” The ministry might accommodate powerful elements of the Whig opposition, and even certain mild Hanoverian Tories, if this were necessary to secure a stable administration. But a regular, “formed” opposition was a danger, and there should be no idea of the existing ministry ever being ousted by it as a whole. The ministry of the Pelhams, which lasted ten years, was based on a remarkably “broad-bottom,” and comprised, at one time or another, elements from every group in the opposition.

Secondly, the opposition Whig groups—the Bedford or “Bloomsbury Gang,” the Temples, and Grenvilles—were driven to defend the constitutional nature of an opposition. They maintained the old Whig principle of resistance, but usually modified it by declaring that a constitutional opposition should be resistance

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to measures rather than to men—that a particular government policy should be resisted, rather than general efforts made to replace the ministry as a whole. They were, for the most part, prepared to unite in opposition up to the point of scaring the men in power, but were content to be absorbed into office in groups, when the possibility arose.

Thirdly, the opposition Tories—Bolingbroke and Wyndham—who objected to the way in which the exclusiveness of Walpole had turned the Hanoverian Succession into a Whig party victory, argued that a ministry should be formed on non-party lines. Bolingbroke's *Idea of a Patriot King* has already been mentioned.¹ But the desire for a ministry based upon "measures and not men" became important with William Pitt in the 1750's, even before George III. made his ill-fated attempt to become a *Patriot King*, who should "espouse no party, but govern like the common father of his people." The aim was to arrange politics so that "none was for a party, and all were for the state." Ministry should be a ministry of national concentration and solidarity, united only in public service and under the leadership of a great personality. The real dispute between Pitt and George III. was that each thought he should be that great personality.

These were the three chief opinions on the place of party in politics at this time. None of them would have produced a party system. They were rudely shaken after 1760 by the determination of George III. to play the rôle of a real *Patriot King*. It is not difficult to understand either his purpose or his popularity when he first came to the throne. England, in the previous two hundred years, had had Welsh, Scottish, semi-French,

¹ Page 33.

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Dutch, and German kings. Those who had been more or less English had been more or less Papist. But George III. was different. It was felt that "it was greatly to his credit" that

*He might have been a Russian,
A Frenchman, Turk, or Prussian,
Or perhaps Italian,
But in spite of all temptations
To belong to other nations,
He remains an Englishman.*

He began his reign by exalting his tutor, Lord Bute—so that it looked as if a Scotsman, after all, was going to rule England. Till then, the Whig lords had all had enough in common to be moderately tolerant of one another, and the Tories were likewise so enmeshed in the same social and economic system, so completely within the same national framework, so little distinct from Whigs in political outlook, that even a Tory ministry would not have meant persecution or disaster for the Whigs. There had been something of a silent conspiracy to secure the rule of oligarchy. But now the king broke both the silence and the conspiracy. There was, in the first three years of his reign, a complete displacement of the Whigs and a complete installation of Tories and those Whigs or indifferent place-hunters who were prepared to play a subservient rôle to the Court.

The king was only doing what the Whigs—and indeed all constitutional theory of the time—had always said he could do: appoint his own ministers and dismiss those whom he did not want. The consistent division between parties in the eighteenth century—as distinct

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from traditional and sentimental differences between Whigs and Tories—was the division between a Court and a Country party, between those who for the time had the confidence, and therefore the patronage, of the king and those who had not. That remained the real division under George III., but the tables were now turned ; which was not at all pleasing to the Whig groups.

And so the group led by Lord Rockingham, which was the lineal descendant of the old Newcastle connection, was forced to evolve some theoretical justification for its uncompromising opposition to the policy of the king. They were driven to oppose both the measures *and* men of government. And the king, by alienating all the Whig groups in turn, threw them into a common opposition. The private secretary and party agent of the Marquis of Rockingham was an Irishman called Edmund Burke, and he it was who first evolved the systematic conception and logical defence of a party system. The essentials of a party system are so often misunderstood in our own days that it may be useful to summarize the main ideas which Burke expounded.

I. The essence of these ideas is a refusal to distinguish between men and measures, as they had always previously been distinguished. The problem of government was not—as Pitt or George III. had thought—to decide upon a policy and then to find men who were willing to support those measures and carry them into effect. Nor was it only, as the old Whigs had thought, to put into power men of great influence, leaving them a more or less free hand to evolve and administer whatever policy they deemed best. For Burke, men and measures are

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inseparable, in the sense that the men responsible for the decisions of policy should also be responsible for putting them into practice ; and in the sense that a system of policy can be adequately applied only by a body of men who really believe in its general principles. You cannot therefore oppose policy without also opposing the personnel of government ; this means that a change of policy demands a change of government—indeed a real change of policy can be effected only by a change of the persons in power. This seemed a startling and even revolutionary notion to men of that time.

2. This involved the belief that “ measures ” of policy must not be thought of as separate acts, but merely as the practical applications of general principles of public policy. It is not, therefore, surprising if the men who hold these general principles find themselves usually in agreement upon most questions of government policy, and often act together in administration and in opposition. Nor is there anything unconstitutional in their banding together so as to co-ordinate their activities. “ It is no crime,” he wrote, “ to endeavour by every honest means to advance to superiority and power those of your own sentiments and opinions.” Organized party has a real and natural place in a free constitution. “ How men can proceed without any connection at all, is to me utterly incomprehensible.” General agreement in politics creates natural ties of loyalty, and it is not factious to vote and act consistently with the same men. “ As the greater part of the measures which arise in the course of public business are related to, or dependent on, some great, leading, general principles in government, a man must be peculiarly unfortunate in the choice of his political company, if he does not agree with them at

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least nine times in ten." This idea seems commonplace to us now. It was almost a novelty a hundred and fifty years ago.

3. From these two beliefs it follows that it is quite constitutional—and indeed natural—for an organized political party to aim at the complete control of government, and displace that party which is already in power. "Party is a body of men united for promoting by their joint endeavours the national interest upon some particular principle in which they are all agreed. For my part, I find it impossible to conceive that any one believes in his own politics, or thinks them to be of any weight, who refuses to adopt the means of having them reduced into practice. . . . Therefore every honourable connection will avow it is their first purpose, to pursue every just method to put the men who hold their opinions into such a position as may enable them to carry their common plans into execution, with all the power and authority of the state. As this power is attached to certain situations, it is their duty to contend for these situations." This kind of party contest, Burke maintains, is bound to promote the public good, so long as it is "a generous contention for power."¹ Indeed the disruptive force of party, which had always been so distrusted, could even be used in this way to promote national solidarity and stable government. "This country will never be governed well," Burke said in 1768, "until we see those who are connected by unanimity of sentiment hold the reins of power." In fact, a one-party government in a two-party system would be the strongest kind of government.

¹ For Burke's arguments in more detail, see his *Thoughts on the Causes of the Present Discontents*.

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We can now see that the value of Burke's ideas was the way in which they reconciled the personal and the impersonal in politics. He offered human personality a new political outlet for self-expression. Hitherto the only personalities which played a decisive part in politics were those of the few group leaders. Even the king had been reduced almost to a cypher, in home affairs at least. But now the ordinary member of a party could be thought of as expressing his own personality in promoting the activities of his political party. The contentions of men for power could be seen against a larger background of conflicting principles.

The idea of a "general sweep" of the ministry by the opposition was, of course, persistently resisted by George III. Tradition and precedent were on his side. The interest of the first two Georges in "harlots and Hanover" left them little time or inclination for personal activity in parliamentary politics. They had no interest in home affairs—however much they had in "household affairs." Because the first two Georges were personally uninterested in domestic politics, they had unwittingly started a notion that the Crown ought to be disinterested in domestic politics. George III. refused to accept and endorse, and therefore to establish, this quite recent notion. To "be a king" meant refusing to yield on occasions when his grandfather would not have bothered to resist. He felt he was on the side of the older and better tradition that the ministers of the Crown are indeed the ministers of the king. He found the opposition very troublesome. "Nothing less will satisfy them," he grumbled, "than a total change of measures and men ; to obtain their support I must deliver up my person, my principles, and my dominions into their hands."

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This, indeed, was precisely what the party system demanded. It meant that the king should reign rather than rule ; that the ministers of the Crown should not necessarily be ministers of the king ; and that the king should be above party, as Bolingbroke desired, but only in the sense of being prepared to accept either party as a ministry.

But in spite of royal resistance a recognizable party system came into being, dominated by the powerful personalities of Charles James Fox and the younger Pitt. The striking rivalry of these two great men showed vividly the rôle which human personality might play in a regular party system. The violent eruption of the French Revolution threw each man, and each party, back upon a clear contrast of political principle. Fox changed from a Liberal to a Radical ; Pitt from a reformer to a Conservative. Their differences of personal temperament made the contrast more vivid : the generous, impulsive, erratic character of Fox on the one side ; the cold, aloof, restrained temperament of Pitt on the other. Each inspired a deep personal loyalty in his followers, though in the second case it was respect rather than love which prompted loyalty.

The seeds of the party system, sown by Burke, Fox, and Pitt at the end of the century, matured and blossomed in the following century. After a period of party confusion caused by the movement for political reform, a two-party system again emerged, dominated again by two strikingly contrasted personalities. The moral idealism and liberal fervour of Gladstone were offset by the nationalist realism and "Tory democracy" of Disraeli. Like Fox and Pitt, both were great parliamentarians, able debaters, and shrewd judges of public

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opinion. Each was able to evoke widespread popular support, and the dramatic conflict between the men and the principles they stood for enlivened politics and lent the glow of personal character to party conflicts.

By then, the fusion of the personal and the impersonal was quite deliberate and conscious. In his novel, *Coningsby*, Disraeli wrote, "It is the personal that interests mankind, that fires their imagination, and wins their hearts. A cause is a great abstraction, and fit only for students: embodied in a party, it stirs men to action; but place at the head of that party a leader who can inspire enthusiasm, he commands the world. Divine faculty! Rare and incomparable privilege!" So powerful has the position of Prime Minister become that it has even been suggested that a General Election in Britain has become something of a plebiscite—a vote for or against a particular man as leader of the State. Certainly Gladstone valued the high office of Prime Minister for the scope which it offered for vigorous action. "The desire for office," he said, "is the desire of ardent minds for a larger space and scope within which to serve the country, and for access to the command of that powerful machinery for information and practice, which the public departments supply." A General Election should be, in part at least, a judgment on the fitness of party leaders to hold that immense power. It is a comment on men, no less than on measures.

Meanwhile, the whole idea of the place which human personality ought to play in politics had been changing. The old idea had been that it was property and not persons which should be represented in Parliament. As late as 1776, Lord Chatham is to be found remarking that "People, however, are apt to mistake the nature of

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Representation, which is not of persons but of property ; and in this light there is scarcely a blade of oats which is not represented." But during the last thirty years of the eighteenth century Radical ideas appeared and grew in England. They came partly from France and partly from America. There began to be much talk of the "Rights of Man." Tom Paine, in his pamphlet of that name, declared that "Men are born, and always continue, free and equal in respect of their rights." The Radical movement—made into a powerful political force by men like Jeremy Bentham and J. S. Mill—became the driving-force behind most of the Liberal reforms of the last century, including the extension of the vote to all classes of men in the state. It was believed that a man ought to have a vote as an individual person, and not simply as the legal owner of a certain piece of land or other material wealth. "One man one vote" became the accepted slogan. And that full democratic theory, outlined in the first chapter above, began to prevail in Britain. In America, the same theory had been accepted in the Declaration of Independence, and in France in the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of Citizens.

Perhaps, then, it may now be admitted that the proposition with which we began Chapter II. is in general true of Britain. The forces of personality and of necessity between them press existing institutions into the service of new needs. This is especially clearly shown by the story of how the British Constitution has developed, and how a party system arose. The aristocratic system of the eighteenth century, like the feudal system before it, was a political system of peculiarly *personal* relationships. One writer has called it "an oligarchy

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tempered by familiarity." These relationships became gradually institutionalized, in the sense that the selfish jostlings of family groups of influential magnates for a place in government were turned into a constitutionally valuable conflict between political parties based upon broad principles of public policy. New possibilities appeared as soon as party came to be thought of not as something in itself undesirable and therefore to be destroyed, but rather as something natural, and capable of being used for legitimate political ends. Within each party the impulses of personal ambition and leadership were harnessed in the cause of responsible government, and utilized to promote stable government by the device of party organization. In Parliament and in the country itself these organized parties were used to promote the democratic process of popular discussion. By the device of a party Cabinet, with a party leader as Prime Minister at its head, the predominant party identified itself temporarily with His Majesty's Government. All the institutions of our political system were charged with a new meaning and content by the invasion of party into politics.

The guiding principle of our political development has been a subtle interaction between trust and scepticism—a readiness to grant a free hand to trusted persons on the one hand, and an anxiety for political and legal guarantees of freedom and personal security on the other. Now it is a Royalist of the seventeenth century, contending that the king can override and set aside the law "where the exigence of the state is apparent," and being stoutly resisted by those who want to bind the King by the common law of the land. Now it is Bolingbroke, urging trust in the moral character of a *Patriot King* as

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the only way to regenerate our corrupt political system, and being opposed by men like Burke, who lauds the House of Commons which shall show "a vigilant and jealous eye over executory and judicial magistracy : an anxious care of public money ; an openness, approaching towards facility, to public complaint." Now it is Disraeli, insisting that a democracy needs inspiring moral leadership, as against Gladstone's anxiety to enable the maximum number of citizens to act on their own behalf. There has always been this diversity of approach to politics. And each stage in our political development has been the result of a compromise between the two.

CHAPTER IV

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“Animals took sides, as always happens. The River-bankers stuck up for you, and said you had been infamously treated, and there was no justice to be had in the land nowadays. But the Wild Wood animals said hard things, and served you right, and it was time this sort of thing was stopped.”

WHAT is a political party? We have already heard Edmund Burke's definition.¹ We shall later discuss other definitions. But it is easier to describe than to define, so we may attempt that first. If we look up the word “party” in the *Oxford English Dictionary* we find that it traces a double derivation of the word: from the French *partie*, meaning a parting or dividing; and from the French *parti*, meaning that which *is* divided, shared, or allotted. One means something active, the other something passive. If we think of the meanings of the word “partial” we get some notion of the difference. When we call a man a “partial witness” we mean that he is a *partisan* of one side in the case; when we speak of a “partial eclipse,” we mean that the sun or moon is only *partly*, and not totally, eclipsed. If we want a brief explanation of the change of meaning which had to happen to the word “party” before we could have a

¹ Page 52, above.

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“party system,” we can hardly do better than describe that change as an evolution from the first, more active meaning (*partie*) to the second, more passive meaning (*parti*). As we have seen, it was only gradually in the course of the eighteenth century that writers began to distinguish between faction and party—between a group based on sectional interests which was apt to disrupt and divide the commonwealth, and a group based on certain principles of public policy, a group of men with a certain attitude to political affairs, a side in an argument, prepared to speak “for their part.” This change in the conception of party came only with a moving of the emphasis from men to measures, and an identification of certain measures with certain men, and the preparedness of men to stand or fall in government by the success of those measures.

In general, we may say that a political party is an association of men which aims at controlling the government in order to put its own policy into practice. Whether it does so by constitutional means or by violence, whether its policy be based upon group interest or public principles, depend upon the whole structure of institutions and traditions in the particular State, and upon the complete set of circumstances at the time. But it can be seen that the men of every political party must have two general aims : to formulate a particular policy, and to get themselves into power so that they can put this policy into practice. Party is a coin with two sides. Its tail side shows that it is a voluntary association of men who are in general agreement about certain political matters. Its head side shows that it is a power organization of men who aim at capturing the machinery of government of the State. This is as true of the Fascist, Nazi, and Com-

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munist parties in the single-party States as it is of the Conservative, Labour, and Liberal parties in the democratic States.

Now we saw in the first chapter that "democracy as a political method means a process of discussion"; and democratic government means that decisions of policy must emerge from this discussion. It will be our purpose in this and the following chapters to examine the part played by political party in this process of discussion, and of the emergence of decision from discussion, in the various kinds of States to-day.

Discussion can take place in the country at large: inside the party; inside the government; or in Parliament. At each of these points human personality impinges upon politics, usually through the medium of political party.

1. Discussion in the country at large

In the Fascist State of Italy and the Nazi State of Germany there is very little political discussion in the country at large. The newspapers, journals, broadcasting, universities, and schools are strictly censored by the government, and the process is not a clash between opinions, but the diffusion of information and ideas and opinions from the government to the citizen. The extensive spy system makes even private criticism and discussion very difficult and always unsafe. Anything you say in a café is liable to be taken down and used as evidence against you—that is, when it is not made up and used as evidence against you.

In Russia popular discussion is encouraged in certain

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directions. The highest officials of the Communist Party seem to be immune from open criticism, and the general principles of the Communist Party are not regarded as a suitable subject for free public discussion and criticism. But the actions of lower party officials and of administrators of farm and factory seem to be fairly widely discussed, as are the details of administration and organization. This is the main purpose of wall-newspapers. Mr. Pat Sloan, who edited one of these wall-newspapers for a few months in Moscow, writes, "The editorial staff of the wall-newspaper, receiving . . . topical comments on the life of the factory, is under an obligation, not merely to publish them, but to investigate the complaints; and to publish the letters with a statement of what has been done to redress the grievances expressed. . . ." ¹ Sidney and Beatrice Webb write, "In the U.S.S.R. . . . the amount of daily discussion of government decisions, before they are finally made, is plainly very considerable. From the trade union or co-operative society or village meetings, up to the frequent sessions of the Central Executive Committee (T.S.I.K.) and the biennial All-Union Congress of Soviets, the systematic discussion of public affairs, from one end of the U.S.S.R. to the other, and in terms which are regularly communicated to the highest authorities, appears, to the citizen of the western world, simply endless." ² This expression of local knowledge, wisdom, and complaint is, of course, essential to the central government. But it does not prove that the Communist system is democratic, as so many writers seem to suppose. Democracy involves judgment on men as well as on measures. On occasion, indeed, the expression of public

¹ *Soviet Democracy*, p. 99.

² *Soviet Communism*, vol. i., p. 446.

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opinion is given a free rein—as over the amendment of the marriage laws in 1935. “In countless discussion meetings,” we are told, “from gatherings of thousands of workers in the large cities to the tiny debates in the peasant village reading-rooms—the separate points of the new draft were thrashed out again and again.”¹ Over 6,000 meetings of this kind were reported, and a flood of letters reached the government, chiefly from working women. The draft of the new Constitution of 1936 was in the same way widely discussed throughout the country.

Popular discussion in the democratic countries is for the most part unorganized. It takes place in homes and at street corners, in pubs and clubs, in newspapers and journals and books like this. Some of it is roughly organized, on a voluntary basis, in schools, churches, study-groups, on the wireless, and at public meetings arranged by various propagandist societies, such as the League of Nations Union, Democratic Fronts, and the rest. But by far the most important single organizer of discussion in the country is the political party. Many of the national newspapers are drawn within the influence, if not the actual ownership, of one or other of the political parties. It is the parties which formulate the broad issues for discussion at any given time, and by taking sides on these issues provoke their followers in the country to take sides too, until the immediate issues become topics of a great national debate. Public meetings are arranged to conduct this debate—and they are organized and financed by the parties. The proposals of government are defended and criticized, alternative measures propounded, grievances and needs are aired,

¹ *Women in Soviet Russia*, by Fannina W. Halle, pp. 109–36.

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relevant public opinion is elicited. This task of focusing and eliciting public opinion on immediate political issues is very necessary to the democratic process. If it were not performed, public opinion would scarcely exist in any effective form. It would be little more than an incoherent mass of unpractical private notions.

Is it desirable, or inevitable, or even natural that public opinion should be so organized as to fall into two main sides, finding expression in two main parties? Many have thought it both desirable and inevitable. This, for example, is what Professor Hearnshaw thinks. He is speaking of Whigs and Tories.

“It is, of course, possible to trace the genealogy of these parties to a still earlier antiquity. For the two parties—Cavalier and Roundhead, Tory and Whig, Conservative and Liberal, Moderate and Progressive—stand for and represent primitive and permanent tendencies in eternal human nature. . . . Looking at history from the point of view of these enduring antinomies of human nature, we can perceive the existence of parties essentially the same as those of the eighteenth century, and of to-day, in every period of our country’s history, and, indeed, in every period of the history of the world. For example, Whigs and Tories, under other names, fought for their fundamental principles—the old *versus* the new—in the Reformation struggles of the sixteenth century; in the conflicts which raged round the Provisions of Oxford and Magna Carta during the thirteenth century; in the fierce controversies which separated Henry II. from Becket, Henry I. from Anselm, and Edwy from Dunstan, in yet earlier ages. In truth, not to labour the point further, it might well be contended that the deep, underlying party division can be traced throughout all recorded history back to the Garden of Eden, where Eve was a progressive, dissatisfied with the present, eager for novelty, willing to run risks, contemptuous of authority and law; while Adam was a moderate, contented and immobile, waiting to be pushed or pulled into innovation.”¹

¹ Dr. Johnson’s version of the same notion was, “the first Whig, Sir, was the Devil”—somewhat more complimentary to Eve.

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It may be admitted that there is often such a conflict in society, and in the individual conscience, between law and liberty, between social conformity and personal self-assertiveness. That is one thing. But it is quite another thing to assume, as Professor Hearnshaw does, that this psychological conflict finds political expression in the clash of organized parties ; and quite another thing again to imply that either party has a monopoly of one of these ideals, or is even particularly prone to one of these impulses.

This argument is false because it is based, as it were, on "mistaken identity." There is a practical tendency in politics to a two-party division in the sense of government and opposition, the ins and the outs. There is, furthermore, in every body of opinion upon certain matters, a very broad and general division into those who want change and those who do not ; although it often happens that the borderline sentiments may be stronger than either extreme, and the difference may be over methods of change, rather than over the question of change itself. This division is often wrongly called a party of liberty and a party of law, or a party of progress and a party of order. These, strictly speaking, are different divisions again. There are, furthermore, two sides to every question—a for and an against—just as there are two answers to a question—yes and no. All these divisions are by nature different from one another : and nothing but confusion of thought results when—perhaps for the sake of rhetorical effect—they are piled one on top of the other, as if they all amounted to the same division. Each division may, in fact, cut across all the others.

To identify the Whigs, for instance, with "progress" and the Tories with "order" leads to a foreshortened

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view of the whole process of history, wherein the Whigs are always on the side of the angels, for the "progress" always came, and the Tories were always wrong. This mistake leads to such exaggerated remarks as the famous epigram of Macaulay, that the Tories always follow behind the Whigs, just as the hind legs of a stag follow the front ones. Historical movement is in this way regarded as the result of a single continuously triumphant tendency, the victory of one particular group of men, instead of the complex product of the *interplay* of innumerable forces and tendencies and personalities.

This false argument is used, too, to make a water-tight justification of a two-party system. Here is Professor Hearnshaw again :

"Logically, there are but two parties possible ; and if at any time (such as the present) there appear to be more than two, this deceptive appearance is simply due to the fact that issues are confused and minds are muddled. For when issues are disentangled, when the many problems of politics are taken one by one, when complicated questions are analysed into their primary constituent elements, and when, after the last analysis, the ultimate points are put individually, two answers alone are conceivable in each case—either an unqualified Yes, or an unqualified No. However loudly third parties may assert themselves, and however confidently they may boast their permanence, when they reach the House of Commons they are disintegrated, for there are only two lobbies in which they can vote." ¹

Here one reaches the very heart of the whole confusion, and the essence of the social function of party. For surely, on this very argument, if there are two answers to *every* question, then the aggregate of public opinion on the whole mass of immediate issues may be divided in

¹ *British Prime Ministers of the Eighteenth Century* : a very slight and popularly written book—but the confusion involved is all the more dangerous for that, and is repeated in the same writer's *Conservatism in England*, chap. i.

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innumerable ways. The man who says Yes to three of the great questions at stake may not find another member of his party who is prepared to say Yes to the same three questions. Indeed, Professor Hearnshaw's argument would logically demand the formation of a completely new party-grouping for each separate issue. Nor, of course, is it even true that every question is capable of being answered by a categorical Yes or No. There are many questions of the "have you stopped beating your wife?" variety. And anyhow, the task of political party is not to provide a simple Yes or No to each question, but the much more rough and ready task of trying to elicit the greatest possible accommodation of opinion upon all the major issues, and so produce some order from the welter of different possible combinations of ideas. For some such order must accompany discussion and precede decision. We have all taken part in discussions which were not prepared for in this way, and we all know how unsatisfying and inconclusive they invariably are.

Party promotes discussion not only of measures but of men. We have already noted that a General Election is a comment on men, no less than on measures; it is, in part, a judgment on the fitness of party leaders to hold the immense power and responsibility of government. Comparison of the types of election manifesto issued in different countries is illuminating. The average English manifesto is official in its general outlines; it tends to emphasize certain points agreed upon by the party headquarters. But considerable scope is allowed for local differences, personal differences of emphasis, some degree of criticism of other party policies, and personal recommendation of the candidate. In the Weimar Republic of Germany, before the coming of

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Hitler, party manifestos were very doctrinaire. Parties were divided by clear distinctions of principle. The Right was Conservative and Prussian. The Centre was Catholic. The Left was Liberal. The extreme Left was Marxist. Each party emphasized its complete difference from all the others. This made a satisfactory party system almost impossible. French election addresses are more in the nature of philosophical proposals than specific practical programmes. Party organization is neither extensive in its scope nor intensive in its control, and so the individual deputy is concerned at election with the general underlying principle of policy which he supports. In America, until very recent times, the chief aim of party has not been legislation, but—in Lord Bryce's words—"to capture, and to hold when captured, the machinery, legislative and administrative, of the legal government established by the Constitution." And so the party platform produced at elections is not meant to be a very accurate account of how that machinery will be used when once it is captured. Indeed, the American party programme is not so much a platform as a running-board. It is not meant to stand on, but only to get in on.

This is not true of the American Presidential Election, which takes place every four years. The President is head of the executive government. The main issue is, therefore, largely personal. It is a vote of confidence in the candidate not so much as the leader of a party, but as a personality, a national leader. In Britain, we distinguish between the "dignified" and the "efficient" parts of the Constitution, the King fulfilling the former and the Prime Minister the latter. The American President performs both, and is therefore thought of as more than simply a party chief. He symbolizes the national

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unity of the United States. The Presidency is almost an unhereditary monarchy. Its prestige and to some extent its actual power, therefore, depend upon the personal character of the man who lives in the White House.

Just one example. This is what one writer has said about President Roosevelt :

“ On March 4th 1933 a transformation took place in the psychology of the American people—a change which was determined to a large extent by the smile and the jaw of the new President. Roosevelt had the two personality traits which Hoover lacked : a sense of humour and a strong ego. He had a musical radio voice too, which immediately commanded the enthusiasm of those who had fallen asleep under the Republican’s Gregorian chanting. Roosevelt liked people and made the fact obvious at a time when the people were most hating themselves. The warp and woof of the Democratic election program was loose enough to allow for any changes in pattern which Roosevelt might want to make after his assumption of office, so it was not the election promises which thrilled the people, but rather the laugh and the confidence behind those promises. There was something else, too ; something more subtle, more difficult to define. It was a general theme running through Roosevelt’s entire election campaign which was cloaked in various phrases : ‘ I’m going to remember the “Forgotten Man,” ’—‘ I advocate the continuous responsibility of government for human welfare,’—loose election palaver, but the way in which he spoke seemed to indicate that he was not fooling.”¹

It would be difficult to find a better example of the power of personality in politics.

Every party system has to meet two requirements. It has somehow to express the broad, general divisions of public opinion in the country at large. It has also, at the same time, to allow for new issues as they appear, and to readjust itself as best it can to comprise these new issues. Two opposite ways in which this can be achieved

¹ Stephen K. Bailey, *Roosevelt and his New Deal*, p. 18.

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are illustrated by the party systems of France and the United States of America.

France has been prevented by her history from developing a clear-cut two-party system. The beginnings of the industrial revolution in France roughly coincided with her political revolution. Had the one preceded the other by a century, as the revolution of 1688 in England preceded the great industrial and agricultural changes of the 1780's, the social movement might have been absorbed easily by her political system. But the economic crisis came whilst her political system was still unstable and a matter of public dispute. So public opinion was confronted at the same time with two issues of the highest importance, yet not necessarily connected. Four different attitudes became possible, and a two-party system became impossible. Instead, there grew up various political groups, expressing various shades of opinion, and realigning themselves in coalitions and oppositions according to the nature of the immediately urgent issues.¹ Each new ministry in France may not be a New Deal ; but at least it is a reshuffle.

At the same time, the reshuffling of these groups has in fact followed a certain rhythm. There is a broad division of opinion in the country between Right, Centre, and Left. Ministries have therefore been swings of the pendulum—to the Right parties when fear of Germany or of internal economic instability has prevailed ; towards the parties of the Left when fear of clericalism or fear for the safety of the Republic has prevailed. A pendulum in its swing covers the Centre more often

¹ For details of the names and nature of the various groups to-day, see Mrs. Dorothy Pickles' "Discussion Book" on *The French Political Scene*, especially chap. iii.

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than any other part. And so, in practice, it is the Centre parties as a whole which have played the chief part in French Government under the Third Republic.

In sharp contrast to the sensitive many-party system of France, with its wide choice of alternative standpoints and policies and candidates, stands the rigid two-party system of the U.S.A. In spite of temporary offshoots and the occasional appearance of smaller third parties, America has never shown any real desire to take "third-party risks." The original division was between those who stuck out for State-rights as against the federal government, and those who wanted a powerful central government. Because, in the Civil War, the northern States had to fight the southern to keep them in the Union, it is largely the southern States which have defended State rights. The Democrats are traditionally strongly entrenched in the south, the Republicans in the north. But times and conditions and issues have changed, and the two great parties have not changed with them. The result is confusion. The issues at stake are, of course, too many and too complicated to be crammed into two rigidly opposed sides. So the parties are left almost without meaning—twin bottles, as Lord Bryce put it, with different labels, but both empty: "collections of professional politicians," as another writer has said, "trading on the irrational loyalties of the mass of the voters."¹

But a new subtlety has crept in, modifying this seemingly out-of-date arrangement. A Right and a Left wing have appeared inside each party. If the tide of national opinion is towards the Left, the effect may be

¹ D. W. Brogan, *The American Political System*, p. 383; a valuable and well-written book, but unfortunately written before the New Deal.

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felt in both parties, and this tide, just as in France, is in a sense more important than the parties. In 1936, for example, a Left-wing Republican, Landon, was running against a Left-wing Democrat, Roosevelt, in the Presidential Election. The two men differed not so much over aims as over methods. So the electorate was offered a real choice of method. And public opinion found intelligent expression through this traditional, but capacious, party system.

In Britain, the rise of the Labour Party, the decline without the disappearance of the Liberal Party, and the splits caused in all parties by the events of 1931, temporarily produced a party system more akin to the French than the American. And Englishmen are at last learning not to regard the group-system as merely an inferior imitation of their own more satisfactory two-party system. Each system is natural to the soil whereon it grew. Indeed, in times of rapidly changing opinion, the group-system is perhaps more to be expected. If the task of party machinery is to be sensitive to the shades of public opinion, it must be admitted that the many-party system is more satisfactory than the two-party system.

We must certainly abandon the beliefs ridiculed by W. S. Gilbert :

*That every boy and every gal
That's born into this world alive,
Is either a little Liberal,
Or else a little Conserva-tive.*

If we do not, we shall find ourselves back in the Garden of Eden with Professor Hearnshaw.

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2. *Discussion inside the Party*

In Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, discussion inside the Fascist and Nazi Parties themselves seems to be the only real discussion allowed ; and even that is limited in many ways. This is what Dr. Finer has said about Italy. "The prescribed annual, or semi-annual, meetings of the local and the Federal Fasci are occasions when the passionate, rather than the intellectual, aspects of Fascism are cultivated. The meetings prescribed are supposed, in the first place, to serve the end of a discussion, in which free intervention is possible. In some places this actually occurs ; and, in discussion, useful hints are given about the state of mind of the population, and suggestions of some value regarding policy as well as propaganda are made." In 1934-35 it was reported that throughout the country a Fascist Left-wing was appearing. This consisted of men who had taken seriously Mussolini's promises of a "social revolution," and wanted the Corporations to replace capitalism. They were able to air their grievances to some extent. And it has been suggested that one reason for the Abyssinian War was its usefulness in distracting attention from these criticisms, and in disposing of the Left-wing men themselves by dispatching them on the campaign.

In the Nazi Party of Germany, until June 30, 1934—the Night of the Long Knives—there was a certain amount of regular criticism. It came chiefly from the Brownshirts, the veteran Storm Troopers of the Party, who thought of themselves as citizens as well as militiamen. They had to have their orders explained to them and justified. They became increasingly disappointed

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with the fruits of the Party victory, and jealous of the preference shown to the new, more mechanically efficient S.S. men. Their grumbling became so audible that Hitler had to issue a warning to them. "I will suppress every attempt to disturb the existing order," he declared, "as ruthlessly as I will deal with the so-called Second Revolution, which could lead only to fresh chaos." The party purge of 30th June was a ruthless quelling of tendencies towards mutiny. Since then, the only chance of diversity of opinion has been within a still narrower circle of Party officials; between, for instance, Dr. Schacht and the Left-wing economists, who want more specifically socialistic measures. But these differences involve very little real discussion, and are not projected in any way on to the larger screen of public debate, even inside the framework of the Party.¹ And now Dr. Schacht has been removed.

The extent to which discussion is encouraged inside the Communist Party of U.S.S.R. is shown by a remark of Sidney and Beatrice Webb. "The action of the Party has frequently been taken after consideration so prolonged, and as the outcome of discussion so heated and embittered, as to bear upon their formulation the marks of hesitancy and lack of assurance." Every stage of the elaborate pyramid of councils and committees is marked by provision for thorough discussion of details of policy. "All power to the Soviets" was Lenin's slogan, and Soviet only means committee. In each committee the actual members of the Party form a group or cell, which directs the activities of the committee. The Party continually issues "directives" to these members, so that

¹ For Nazi Party organization, see Stephen H. Roberts, *The House that Hitler Built*.

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the activities of these various committees—in farm, factory, co-operative, or trade union—are co-ordinated and to some extent controlled from the centre. Nevertheless Trotskyists and those heretics known as “Left-wing deviationists” are periodically hunted down and eliminated: and discussion takes place only within the framework of the orthodox Marxist assumptions. No prolonged radical disagreement is safe. No dissentient minority, for instance, would be allowed to secede from the Party, and form an organized critical group. It is important that this fact should be remembered when the U.S.S.R. is hailed as being more “democratic” than the democracies.

In the democratic States, many details of party and national policy may, indeed, be discussed in local party meetings; but the periodical party conferences and conventions, which are the custom in most States, are concerned much more with choice of men than with criticism of measures. In America the national Party Convention is the machine for selecting the candidate for the Presidency, and—nominally—for drawing up the platform upon which the Presidential Election is to be fought. It therefore meets only once in four years, except in special circumstances, and is a process not so much of discussion as of bargaining with votes, and trying to arrive at the choice of one man whom all factions can be induced to support. The delegates to these conventions, as well as the candidates for office, are usually chosen by Party “Primaries” in the separate States of the Union. But the Primary, again, is not so much an instrument of discussion as an attempt to secure some popular control over choice of representatives.

The three great parties in Britain hold an annual

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conference, where general principles of policy are discussed and particular criticisms considered. The policy of the Labour Party is probably determined more by its annual conference than are the policies of the Liberals or Conservatives. For all, the conference is a useful means of testing the general opinion amongst the Party rank and file : and at most conferences, unless there happens to be a single predominant issue involved, discussion tends to be somewhat inconclusive.

3. *Discussion inside the Government*

At the head of most modern States is a committee, a council, a cabinet—a group of men usually consisting of the chief ministers or heads of administrative departments. We said that all modern government is party government : it is also, at least in form, committee government. As the meetings of these governing committees are usually secret, it is not easy to discover precisely how they are conducted in different countries.

The real sovereign in Italy—despite the stucco exterior of a constitutional monarchy—is the Grand Council of the Fascist Party. It is officially described as “ the supreme organ which co-ordinates and integrates all the activities of the régime which issued from the Revolution of October, 1922.” Mussolini is its President, and he convenes it when he thinks necessary. Mussolini fixes the subjects for discussion. The Ministers for Foreign Affairs, the Interior, Justice, Finance, Education, Agriculture and Forests, and Corporations are amongst the *ex officio* members of it. In 1929 the Minister for Foreign Affairs,

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the Interior, and Corporations was Mussolini. He has since resigned the first of these to his son-in-law, and the third to a friend. Of the rest, three are life-members, and the others are appointed by Mussolini himself for a period of three years. In this way the Duce is freed from any pressure or opposition on the part of the regular members—he can always flood the committee with his own friends and nominees. There is no way of ensuring that the Duce shall *take* the advice even of this body ; the law only says he must *seek* it on certain matters.

And what kind of “ discussion ” goes on inside this Council ? Here is Dr. Finer’s account :

“ Here, in mysterious sittings, which are fixed for late in the evening, and which usually rise in the early hours of the morning, the fullest, frankest discussions in the whole of Italy are to be heard. . . . Inside, all cards are laid on the table, excepting for a few time-servers who have not the courage to express their doubts. It is here that Mussolini, who has suitably prepared himself by sedulous coaching, is able to exhibit those magistral qualities of omniscience in principle, and readiness in detail, which are such spell-weaving revelations to his colleagues. Here, in the midnight sessions, sometimes ending only with the dawn (not in winter), the voice of the Duce is not infrequently heard for more than an uninterrupted hour, commanding, demonstrating, wooing and winning. Here the full storm, the raging tempest, of black brows, and sweeping gestures and thumping fists, accompanies the lightning flashes over the horizon to be lighted up ‘ for the cause of the Revolution.’ And when the resolutions have been passed, and the queer clairvoyance of a sleepless night need no longer be held under control, the comrades, realizing the importance of the work just done, praise each other fittingly.”¹

So, in Italy at least, it would seem that the power of personality short-circuits the value of discussion in politics.

¹ *Mussolini's Italy*, p. 283.

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Hitler combines the powers of President and Chancellor, and these State-powers, together with his power as Leader of the Nazi Party, make him in effect the supreme power in Germany. Beyond this, his domination has not been institutionalized, as has the dictatorship of Mussolini in Italy. The ultimate decisions are wrapped in mystery. They seem to emerge from private consultations between Hitler and individual ministers. There is even less discussion than in Italy.

In an interview with Emil Ludwig, Stalin is reported to have said : " No ; single persons cannot decide. The decisions of single persons are always, or nearly always, one-sided decisions. In every collegium, in every collective body, there are people whose opinion must be reckoned with. . . . In our leading body, the Central Committee of our Party, which guides all our soviets and party organizations, there are about seventy members. . . . In this areopagus is concentrated the wisdom of the Party. Every one is able to contribute his experience." And the Webbs have described Stalin's methods. " He is not conceited enough to imagine that he has, within his own knowledge and judgment, any completely perfect plan for surmounting the difficulties. None of the colleagues seated round the committee-table, as he realizes, has such a plan. He does not attempt to bully the committee. He does not even drive them. Imperturbably he listens to the endless discussion, picking up something from each speaker, and gradually combining every relevant consideration in the most promising conclusion then and there possible." ¹

In short, the influence of the personality of Stalin on the Russian Government seems to be that of accommo-

¹ *Soviet Communism*, vol. i., p. 437.

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dation, integration, and persuasion. He has been called the perfect managing-director. But although he enjoys an immense amount of pictorial publicity, remarkably little is known about him as a person. He is rarely seen, rarely gives an interview, seldom makes a great public speech. And it is impossible to judge how far the man runs the machine of bureaucracy : how far the machine runs the man.

Japan, too, is ruled nominally by a Cabinet. But this Cabinet is responsible, not to the Parliament but to the Emperor ; and therefore to the military class which controls the Emperor. Military, naval, air, and civil services are controlled directly by the Emperor. And so, whilst there may be discussion within the Cabinet, it is again discussion without political value, for it finds no expression in decision and action.

It is surprising how ignorant we still are of precisely what happens inside the British Cabinet. As in all democratic committees, complete freedom of discussion is allowed. The exact value and conclusiveness of this discussion seems to depend largely upon the personality of the presiding Prime Minister himself. The conventions of the Constitution impose upon the Prime Minister the need to produce at least a formal unanimity amongst his Cabinet, and this must be a constant consideration in his mind. Hence the famous story told of Lord Melbourne. After his Cabinet had come to a decision about the Corn Laws : " By-the-bye, there is one thing we haven't agreed upon, which is, what are we to say ? Is it to make our corn dearer, or cheaper, or to make the price steady ? I don't care *which* : but we had better all be in the same story." It is the Prime Minister's job to see that the Cabinet presents, if possible, a united front.

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It seems that the actual counting of votes in the Cabinet is unusual. Discussion is continued until general agreement is reached, as in a jury. The subject is "talked round" until some compromise suggests itself. The majority overrides the minority only when deep divisions appear. Then the minority has the alternative either of accepting the majority decision as their own, or resigning from office. This process of general accommodation will clearly work best when all members of the Cabinet belong to the same party, and are united by ties of personal friendship and loyalty, as well as by a common political creed.

It is generally agreed that Mr. Asquith, in his later years, exercised little control over the discussion at Cabinet meetings. When not interested in a discussion, he would write letters until it seemed to have exhausted itself. There would even be a discussion at each end of the table, with the Prime Minister calmly writing letters in the middle. The Prime Minister can, if he wishes and emergency demands, interfere greatly in the conduct of the various departments. Mr. Lloyd George, for example, in the War Cabinets did this more than any other recent Prime Minister. But so great is the bulk of business that normally, as Lord Rosebery said, "A First Minister is the most that can be hoped for, the Chairman and, on most occasions, the spokesman of that Board of Directors which is called the Cabinet; who has the initiation and guidance of large courses of public policy; but who does not, unless specifically invoked, interfere departmentally."¹ The Prime

¹ Quoted in *Cabinet Government*, p. 149, where Dr. Ivor Jennings has compiled much valuable information on the working of the British Cabinet system in the last hundred years.

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Minister may, in emergency, act as his own Foreign Minister—as did Mr. Chamberlain in his visits to Germany in the crisis of 1938 : and the vital discussion may, as on these occasions, be confined to a small “Inner Cabinet.”

The American President's Cabinet is a very different institution from the British Cabinet. It consists of ten heads of departments, liable to dismissal by the President individually or as a body. It meets regularly, and although it is bound to give advice when he asks for it, it cannot insist upon offering advice. It has no corporate responsibility. In appointing Cabinet Ministers, the President is expected to distribute posts amongst various sections of the Party, and can go outside his own Party. Discussion therein is naturally dominated more completely by the President. The classical story is of Lincoln's announcing a decision : “Noes seven, ayes one ; the ayes have it.” American politics leave even wider discretionary powers to the President than does the English system.

But in this respect, as in many others, the French system is more supple and more subtle than either. The effective head of the government is the President of the Council of Ministers. The President of the Republic has been confined more and more to representing the “dignified part” of the Constitution. In theory it is he who selects the ministers. In practice, he appoints the President of the Council of Ministers (the Premier), who in turn appoints the ministers. The Premier's choice is not limited to Senators or Deputies, for any one over twenty-one years of age may be appointed minister. Thus a general or an admiral may be appointed Minister of War or Marine. Nor is he limited to members of his

own party, for there are so many parties that every Ministry is a coalition, and the Premier is expected to accommodate representatives of the chief groups who support him. This makes it possible for the one Ministry to reflect Left-wing opinion upon some matters, whilst it satisfies Right-wing desires in others. M. Poincaré's Ministry of July 1926 gave the political posts to the parties of the Left, who held a majority in the Chamber : the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Education. It gave the economic posts to men of the Right, Tardieu going to the Ministry of Public Works and Poincaré himself to the Ministry of Finance. The Council of Ministers makes its decisions as a whole, and is jointly responsible to Parliament. Its deliberations are secret. The Premier therefore has the delicate threefold task of keeping his Ministers in general agreement, of keeping his majority in the Chamber, and of keeping public opinion in favour of that Ministry and its majority. And French parties have been called "keyboards on which the President of the Council plays, with more or less skill, so as to execute his own scheme of politics—assuming that he has one."¹ Much depends on his own character and personality. And French politics seem to demand a variety of personalities in this post, judging by the frequency with which the Premier is changed. The comedian, Will Rogers, used to say that he had watched the changing of the Guard in London and had then gone to Paris to watch another daily spectacle, the changing of the Prime Minister. Nevertheless, the same men tend to recur as Premiers—Briand, five times ; Chaumets, four times ; Tardieu, Laval, and Daladier, three times each—

¹ Emmanuel Berl, *La Politique et les Partis*, p. 129.

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since the War.¹ French Cabinets are infinitely collapsible, and there is a curious musical-chairs process in French politics. The band plays, there is excited running round, but when the music stops it is found that the company has only shuffled round, a few having lost their seats in the process. The French political system is perhaps the least "impersonal" of all modern democratic governments.

The executive government of Switzerland is the Federal Council of seven ministers, chosen every four years by the Federal Assembly. This Council is more independent of the representative assembly than are the Cabinets of either Britain or France. It does not rest upon a party majority in the Assembly, nor does it resign when the Federal Assembly decides against it. It has not, however, the same degree of independence as the President of America; the Assembly can issue instructions which must be followed by the Council. Six or seven parties are represented in the Assembly, but few of these are represented in the Council. Federal Councillors are normally re-elected as long as they want to serve. And they are chosen, not as party politicians but as good administrators, who may have proved their ability in local government. As Lord Bryce said: "It is administrative skill, mental grasp, good sense, tact and temper that recommend a candidate." Internal disagreement is not hidden, but openly declared, and is resolved either by compromise or by concession to the opinion of the Assembly. One Councillor each year is chosen as President, and though formally only the Chairman of Council, he is the first citizen of the nation,

¹ i.e. up to April, 1938. See the interesting tables in D. M. Pickles' *The French Political Scene*, pp. 172-73. There is also a good account in *Democratic Governments in Europe*, ed. R. L. Buell.

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and represents it in a "dignified" capacity.¹ The Swiss form of government ranks closely beside the French as one of the least "impersonal" amongst modern democracies.

4. *Discussion in Parliament*

Free discussion in an assembly of popular representatives exists in all democratic countries. In single-party States such an assembly, where it exists at all, is only a means of registering the decrees of government. Such was the Chamber of Deputies in Italy, whose members were in effect nominated by the Fascist Grand Council. It was retained as a "by-product of the necessity for popular approval." In Germany, "Legality Adolf" has kept the Reichstag in existence long enough to effect his Revolution in an apparently "constitutional" way.

The basis of the Russian representative system is given in the following Articles from the Constitution of 1936 :

Article 32. The legislative power of the U.S.S.R. is exercised exclusively by the Supreme Council of the U.S.S.R.

Article 33. The Supreme Council of the U.S.S.R. consists of two chambers : the Council of the Union and the Council of Nationalities.

Article 34. The Council of the Union is elected by the citizens of the U.S.S.R. on the basis of one deputy per 300,000 of population.

Article 35. The Council of Nationalities consists of deputies appointed by the Supreme Councils of the Union and autonomous republics and soviets of toilers' deputies in the autonomous provinces : on the basis of ten deputies from each Union republic, five deputies from each autonomous republic, and two deputies from each autonomous province.²

¹ The same man may not be President for two consecutive years, but he may recur as often as a French Premier. Dr. Giuseppe Motta was President in 1915, 1920, 1927, 1931, and 1937, and has been a member of the Federal Council for over twenty years continuously.

² *The Draft Constitution of the Soviet Union, 1936.*

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How far elections are really free, how far reliable members of the Communist Party are inserted in the key positions, and how far this Supreme Council is able to exercise any real control over the executive government, it is impossible to determine ; and upon these factors depends the political value of the discussion which takes place in these representative assemblies. Most of the real popular discussion certainly seems to take place, as has already been shown, in the local bodies and institutions—collective, factory, village, trade union.

The part played by party in organizing discussion and conducting debate in the representative assemblies of democratic States is clear and simple. The natural tendency of all groups outside the governing party or coalition is to unite in criticism of the ministry. The presence of organized opposition groups ensures that considerable minorities are not without their spokesmen in the national debate, that the arguments against any particular measure are fully stated, and that such criticism should often find practical expression in amendments or readjustments. The “ins” become the “pros,” and the “outs” become on the whole the “cons.” It has sometimes been said that the duty of an opposition is to oppose. It is not. It is to criticize. Mere blind opposition, for its own sake, cannot add to reasonable discussion. The task of opposition is to see that every important measure is discussed before it is passed, and that no debate is a formality. It helps the ministry by keeping it in touch with all phases of public opinion, and by reminding it that there are more than two sides to most questions.

There used to be considerable dispute over the extent to which constituencies ought to control their repre-

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sentatives after election. On the one side it was argued that representatives should be given specific instructions by those whom they were supposed to represent ; that they should attend the debates of the representative assembly already committed to particular measures. On the other side it was contended that this was to make decision precede discussion, and therefore to make all parliamentary debate unreal ; that government was not merely a matter of will, but of knowledge, wisdom, judgment, and experience ; and that members of parliament represented not particular localities or sectional interests, but the nation as a whole. The dispute was settled in practice, and has now become more or less unreal, by the growth of an organized political party as the all-important intermediary. Each member of the parliament is not controlled directly by his own particular constituency, nor is he allowed complete discretion as to how he votes in parliament. He is controlled by the headquarters and official programme of his own party (the party "caucus"), which in turn is guided by consideration of the conditions in each constituency. He can defy the demands of this caucus, but only if he is prepared to lose the valuable support—financial and otherwise—of the party machinery at the next election. The final sanction wielded by the party "whip" is the power to put serious impediments in the way of a member's future political career. In Britain, the mere threat of an early general election is often enough to make many party waverers hasten to toe the party line.

The power of the party caucus is perhaps greatest in U.S.A. But there the power of the local "mandate" is closely connected with it. The representative must live in the State for which he is chosen. He is expected to be

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a spokesman of local interests, and to see that a good share of the benefits of any public works undertaken by the Federal Government comes to the locality. In so doing, he can be at the same time a good party man, for, as has already been suggested, American parties are concerned more with gaining power than with general public policy. In Britain the ordinary Member of Parliament owes direct allegiance to the party machine, and serves local interests only through it, or by private motions in the House. In France, because of the extreme looseness of party organization, the representative is allowed much greater independence. His chief concern is very often with the interests of the locality which returned him. The instability of Ministries makes it possible for the individual Deputy to extract from them various local concessions in return for his parliamentary support. The eternal dilemma of representative government is the need to secure a harmony and balance between individual independence and legislative efficiency. The American Congress, separated from the executive, can either abandon itself to pointless debate, leaving the President and the Senate to "act regardless," or secure power for some of its members at the expense of all the rest. It usually chooses the second alternative, concentrates all power in the majority, and its discussions therefore become unreal.

The British House of Commons has contrived to maintain a balance by such devices as closure and the guillotine, whilst allowing considerable question time and a certain amount of time for private members' bills. Above all, the member, if he be a person of striking originality or constructive ability, can influence the policy of his own party, whose officials are by no means

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insensitive to the opinion of its parliamentary representatives. The French Chamber has tipped the balance in the opposite direction to the American Congress by allowing "Interpellations." Any single Deputy can address an Interpellation to a Minister. It is a somewhat elaborate question, with the purpose of putting the Ministry to the trouble of explaining its policy or methods in some particular respect. The Minister is not obliged to reply—but continued refusal would endanger the position of the Ministry. In Switzerland, the existence of the Initiative and Referendum, appealing directly to the electorate, would seem to involve distrust of elected representatives. But precisely because of these general checks on the assembly, the individual representative is actually allowed great freedom.

And so, if we may generalize, the more a representative assembly is made directly responsive to public opinion, the greater the freedom that can be allowed to the individual member of that assembly ; and the freer are the representatives as a body, the more need there is for party discipline. Where neither control exists vigorously—as in France—government tends to be unstable. Where both exist strongly—as in U.S.A.—discussion tends to be unreal. The task of representative government is to find and to keep a balance between the two ideas of a free representative and a responsible assembly. In this sense, the Initiative and the Referendum fill the rôle in Switzerland which is played in Britain by party organization and discipline. All are methods of expressing the qualities of personality in politics.

In this chapter we have been considering the various ways in which discussion plays a part in politics, for it is by discussion that human personality most readily finds

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expression in politics. The various levels of discussion must not, however, be too clearly separated. Thus debate within the House has much effect on discussion outside the House: for, with public reporting of parliamentary debates and the local reporting of a member's speeches by the provincial Press of his own constituency, discussion in representative governments has become in many ways an organic whole. Moreover, the effect of public discussion is not expressed only or completely by voting at elections. Voting is only the practical way of registering popular opinion. Far more important is the continuous but more impalpable influence of the mere fact that public opinion *is* expressible in the party system. It means that a government, however great its majority, must always keep one eye on the next election. It knows all the time that there is a limit of unpopularity which it must try not to reach. It is constantly restrained by the mere fact of open opposition. That is what makes government in the widest sense "representative."

CHAPTER V

POPULAR DECISIONS

“If that is really so,” said the good-natured Rat, already appeased, “then my advice to you is, considering the lateness of the hour, to . . . be very patient. For I am convinced that we can do nothing until we have seen the Mole and the Badger, and heard their latest news, and held conference and taken their advice in this difficult matter.”

PERSONALITY can express itself in politics through discussion, and the chief ways in which it can do this have been considered. Discussion, however, is without political value (and of very little personal value) unless it is embodied in decision. Discussion without decision is academic, fruitless, unreal. So it is necessary to consider the ways in which decision can emerge from discussion before the real place of personality in politics can be appreciated.

The decision of a community can be sought in three ways : in a systematic way, by regular General Elections of Representatives ; in a more direct way, by the occasional use of the Initiative, Referendum, and Recall ; in a direct but unsystematic way, by Plebiscite. These three methods must now be explained, examined, and compared.

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1. *General Elections*

It has already been suggested that General Elections would be impossible without some kind of political party. The activities of party are necessary to focus public opinion on the most urgent political issues, to find and present suitable candidates, to conduct elections. Because party is a coin with two faces ; because it is not only a voluntary association, a social group, but also a political power-organization of men who want to control or to be the government—it is indispensable for eliciting decision. In a democracy nothing can be done without a majority. And majorities do not come ready-made.

How are candidates and leaders selected in representative government ? There are three chief ways.

First, there is the method which may be called local natural selection, such as existed in many county constituencies in England before the existence of highly organized parties, and such as still exists in many Swiss Cantons. A prominent local man, known to most electors in the constituency, may come to be generally recognized as a suitable person to represent the locality in the central assembly. Or the locality may summon a great man of national repute, whose political opinions are well known or whose personality inspires confidence, to represent it. In this way the Whigs of Bristol chose Edmund Burke in 1774, and the University electors of Oxford chose Mr. A. P. Herbert in 1935. In many Swiss Cantons there is no sharp division between parties, and very little party organization ; and representatives are often chosen less for their political opinions than for

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their local popularity, reputation, or influence. In modern Britain, with a few notable exceptions (the Chamberlains at Birmingham, for instance), this personal influence is exerted more in local government than in central government, and a candidate must be promoted by a great political party before he has a real hope of election.

Secondly, candidates may be appointed or accepted by local party associations. In France the direct influence of the locality over the representative is more detailed and more permanent than in Britain. In France it is more important to have a strong local connection. In Britain the national party organizations seldom attempt to dictate the choice of candidates to the local bodies. The central office may suggest and recommend names. It is possible to have a central reservoir of candidates, so that the party agent is able to advise local associations as to which man is likely to suit their needs. But no one can be forced upon the local constituency if it does not want him.

Thirdly, the choice of candidate may be left entirely to the central party organization. This is the extreme development of the centralizing tendency apparent in all fighting organizations. The job of a party is to win an election. It fights best as a unit. Therefore its activities should be controlled from the centre. This is the logic behind the development of American parties. The vastness of the electorate, the wide range of offices at stake, the spoils system and the institutions of the Primary and the Party Convention, have conspired to consolidate centralized control. The "Primary" is the local association of party members, which chooses candidates for lesser offices and delegates for the secondary conventions,

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which in turn choose candidates for the higher offices. To be on the party register entitles one to vote in the Primary. The citizen—except at Presidential elections—can exercise his vote only in the Primary, arranged by the party for its own registered members. This soon led to considerable corruption and injustice. It was the boast of political bosses that they did not care who could elect candidates so long as they were able to nominate them in the first place. The so-called “Direct Primary” method has been evolved, with the aim of enabling the voters themselves to have more say in nominating men as candidates. This is supposed to free nominations from direct party control. How far it has succeeded is still somewhat doubtful. For there is now a pre-Primary Primary, which is a device for retaining power in the hands of the “invisible government” of the party machine. The difficulty is that each State is traditionally either Democratic or Republican in its party politics. In the southern States, the Democratic candidate is nearly always certain of election; in the northern, the same is true of the Republican candidate. And so, in a general way, nomination as candidate is equivalent to election. Nearly every seat is a “safe” seat—which means that the party is the power that matters. To be on the party “ticket” is the aim of every aspiring politician. This is equally true of the choice of candidate for the Presidency. The party caucus decides whom it will “run” for the Presidency. The popular vote is simply offered alternative men—a plebiscite of personality. In Britain the party leader—the potential Prime Minister—is similarly chosen by his party, which means, roughly, by its parliamentary members, upon whose loyalty and support the leader must ultimately rely. It is extraordinary that none

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of our parties seems to have any regular machinery for choosing its leader. All believe that he will naturally "emerge" when need be.¹

Public opinion consists, ultimately, of the mass of notions and ideas disseminated by innumerable means other than party—by private conversation, sermons, broadcasts, the theatre and cinema, the daily Press and periodicals, schools, and propagandist organizations of every kind. The purpose of political party, too, is to assist in spreading ideas and opinions in this way. But more specifically its task is to strengthen those currents of opinion which are congenial to its own principles and policy, to recommend and expound its proposals to the electorate, to propagate and explain its principles, to define political issues, emphasize their importance and significance and concentrate attention upon them: in short, to amalgamate and politicize public opinion which would be otherwise fluid and incoherent. Having cultivated public opinion, it must then contrive to precipitate it out at election time in a pattern which will bring to its leaders the desired mandate to govern. If opinion were left to crystallize out by itself, the process would almost certainly be too prolonged and indefinite for the needs of government. It would not produce a decisive pattern. Party, then, is the necessary catalyst which hastens the precipitation, as in a chemical action. It is of the utmost importance in representative government that it is one and the same process of precipitation which determines the tendency of opinion, and which also

¹ In 1899 the Liberal members of the Commons met and formally chose Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman as their leader. (He became, in due course, Prime Minister when the Liberals came into power in 1905.) This, however, was because their former leader, Sir William Harcourt, had retired somewhat unexpectedly.

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automatically indicates the men who are to hold office and to be responsible for its practical execution. The essence of representative government through party is the killing of two birds with one stone.

Representative government depends upon determining the majority decision of the electorate. Political party performs this task. And if it be asked whether party "determines" the majority decision in the sense of discovering something which already exists, or rather in the sense of helping to create and define something which would scarcely exist in recognizable form without party, then the only adequate answer is that party does both. In the production of a majority decision, both processes take place at the same time—a process of discovery and creation, of expression and impression, acceptance and suggestion. The task of political leadership demands ability to do both these things at the same time, to make opportunities as well as take them. To lead public opinion in politics means contriving to bell the cat by jumping just before it jumps.

Parliamentary debate, then, marks only the final process of distilling decision from discussion. Within the last half-century the drift of representative government has been towards removing real decision from parliament to the committee within the predominant party. This tendency has already been noted. But however much decision may be removed from parliament to party, that decision in a representative government is at least made in the knowledge that it will have to be explained in parliament, and that the discussion which ensues will be made known and continued in the country at large. The decision, wherever made, has to be made with one eye on its general acceptability, and that is a

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very important condition. The not very far-off divine event to which the whole creation of the party system moves is the next election. It is the nearness and the certainty of this day of reckoning which distinguishes decision in a representative government from decision in a single-party State. It is true that the basis of all government is the consent of the governed in the long run. But the aim of the single-party State is to secure for the government as long a run as possible. The aim of representative government is to shorten the time-lag between decision and judgment as much as is compatible with efficient administration. Every political decision has to take some account of the verdict of public opinion, for by that verdict it must in the end stand or fall. But how early and how often that verdict ought to be sought is the great issue between democracy and dictatorship.

Some peoples have contrived to get that verdict even more regularly and more directly than is possible by occasional elections of representatives. They have used the devices of the Initiative, the Referendum, or the Recall.

2. Initiative, Referendum and Recall

The first two of these are used in Switzerland, both in separate Cantons and in the Federal Constitution. The Initiative gives to a fixed number of citizens the right to initiate changes in the Constitution, or to propose new laws. The proposals are then submitted to the Referendum. This allows the electorate to accept or to reject a measure, even if it has been already passed by the law-making assembly. As already indicated, the Referendum has tended to become, in effect, a substitute for the party

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system. Laws may be rejected—as were four in one year alone—chiefly as a protest against the high-handed behaviour of the ruling majority in the assembly, rather than as a condemnation of the particular proposals themselves. And the same majority, duly admonished, can then be reinstated at the next election. The Swiss dislike sweeping changes of personnel in government, and think little in terms of party. So they use the Referendum as a timely warning, a straw in the wind, like a by-election, or a means of rebuke, like a vote of censure. The assembly is thereby made to consult public opinion, anticipate objections, and simplify legislation, in much the same way as if it were operated by the party system. But measures and men are not identified. Measures tend to be considered and decided more on their own grounds, and apart from the men who support them. No party prestige is involved in their acceptance or rejection.

This method has both advantages and disadvantages. The Referendum is a clumsy method. Decisions so made are usually based on very inadequate discussion, and on no formal debate. Subtle amendment and readjustment after discussion are impossible. Only a plain Yes or No are allowed for. On the other hand, the Swiss system allows the law to be administered smoothly by the same experienced set of representatives—so long as they retain their personal reputations—and gives a cogency and stability and continuity to politics and administration which other countries may well envy. On the whole, Swiss use of the Referendum has been conservative in its effect. When the individual is confronted with the alternative of accepting or rejecting a new proposal, it is no doubt safer to say No than

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Yes. The Referendum is not a particularly progressive instrument.

Direct decision by the electorate has also been used in Australia, democratic Germany between 1919 and 1933, and certain States of America. In Australia it is limited to fundamental issues of constitutional amendment,¹ and matters such as compulsory military service and nationalization of monopolies. Germany under the Weimar Constitution had considerable experience of both methods of direct popular decision. It was found that the voting on the Referendum was not very different from the distribution of votes given to the political parties at the previous General Election. The discussion on the Referendum was, in fact, conducted by the political parties themselves, who took sides on the issue and marshalled all their resources on one side or the other. The issues were related to the general principles of each party, and no doubt party voters voted accordingly. So the Referendum produced little independent thought or decision, and certainly had no general pacifying effect. It stirred up the usual hostilities, and meanwhile embarrassed the ministry and made it more unstable than before. The propaganda on either side was negative rather than constructive or informative. There was unenlightened controversy and inadequate discussion. Disgruntled parties were given a free hand to agitate for the sake of agitation. Temporary considerations and personal feelings tended to prevail over long-range views and general interests. Of the American States, Oregon has experimented more boldly with direct decision than most other States. Massachusetts and a

¹ It was proposed that the seven parliaments of the Commonwealth should be united into one ; and that a Referendum on this should be held in 1939.

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dozen other, mainly Western, States have also used the Initiative and Referendum. In general, it has been found that the Initiative has produced many laws that are clumsy, confused, and unwise, and many which have been rejected.

The system of Recall is the application of direct decision to the personnel of government. It exists amongst certain American States. It enables the electorate to remove a representative, an administrative officer, or a judge before his term of office has expired, and to appoint another in his place. It has been used chiefly against administrative officers—mayors, governors, or their subordinates—and is a useful safeguard against extreme corruption. On the other hand, it allows a loophole for personal malice, and tends to weaken legitimate authority. It may weaken a courageous official in his fight against vested interests, for by prolonged and intensive agitation they can get him removed from power. The right to depose judges by popular clamour is of even more doubtful value, if it makes justice subservient to agitators. And there is always the argument that if the electorate can make so serious an error in appointing a man, then it can make just as serious a mistake in deposing a man. The Recall is at best an emergency measure, promoting neither discussion nor responsible decision. It is, in America, a patch on a ragged, inadequate party system, which is concerned with men and scarcely at all with measures. It should be noted, however, that it is at least a device which it is difficult to imagine being adopted by any of the single-party States.

Experiments in direct decision by the electorate were popular in post-war Europe, especially amongst those

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States influenced by German thought. The new constitutions showed considerable ingenuity in devising variations on the Initiative and Referendum, such as granting to the minority a right to postpone legislation, and allowing the President (in Latvia) the right to hold a Referendum.¹ In Estonia an adverse Referendum was followed by a dissolution of the Assembly, so that it became equivalent to a "Recall" of the whole legislature. Between March 1934 and February 1936 Estonia was under the rule of martial law, and in 1936 a Referendum was taken on a new Constitution, wherein 75 per cent. voted in favour of a parliament of two houses. This new Constitution came into being on January 1, 1938.

What, then, is the value of direct decision by the electorate as compared with representative government? Can these various devices be used to strengthen or improve our representative system? The reader may continue the discussion for himself. Perhaps no general dogmatic conclusion can be reached. But here, in conclusion, is the judgment of Professor Laski upon the Referendum:

"The fact is that the whole theory of a referendum misconceives what an electorate is for. It forms a view upon a general web of political tendency; it returns men to vote for or against the large pattern of that web. Political parties organize that pattern for decision as best they can. To select out of it a single strand and ask the voters to separate it from the general web is to call them to a function for which, as a mass, they are unsuited. Direct government, in short, is not the same thing as self-government; it may, indeed, as the experience of fascist countries has shown, be the exact anti-thesis of it. The business of an electorate is to choose a party to be

¹ Miss Headlam-Morley's *The New Democratic Constitutions of Europe* describes these democratic experiments.

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a Government and at the end of its term pronounce judgment upon its record as a whole. Particular measures within that record throw the whole judgment out of perspective if they are selected as objects of popular decision. They do so not least because, as soon as they are so selected, they cease to be particular objects. They become confused with the general judgment which a democracy feels able pretty effectively to pronounce.”¹

3. *The Plebiscite*

The *Plebiscitum*—like the *Dictator*²—was an institution of ancient republican Rome. It was a decision made by the whole community as distinct from a decision made by the Senate. In origin it is scarcely distinguishable from the Referendum. But as used in modern Europe it has usually been a weapon of dictators rather than of democracies. It was used extensively by Napoleon, so as to grant him an apparent mandate for his ambitious schemes ; often merely as a recognition of an already accomplished fact. It is a favourite device of dictators, because, whilst seeming to be a concession to extreme democratic sentiment, it can, if conducted under carefully arranged conditions, give any result required. It is a very useful means of masking the transition from a system of government in which administrators are regularly responsible to public opinion to a system in which the government is given a free hand. The French Constitution of 1799 was submitted to a plebiscite of the whole people. Voting was not secret. By it Napoleon became First Consul. It was accepted by over 3,000,000 votes as against 1,526. Two years later another plebiscite was held on the question, “Is Napoleon Bonaparte

¹ *Parliamentary Government in England* (1938), p. 133.

² Page 34.

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to be made Consul for life ? ” The people of France answered Yes by over 3,500,000 as against 8,374. Two years later Napoleon declared himself Emperor ; this, too, was accepted by a plebiscite of over 3,500,000 as against 2,569. So each stage of his climb to power was marked by this device. It was similarly used in his foreign conquests. He forced a new Constitution on Holland, for instance, which a plebiscite rejected by 52,000 to 16,000 votes. But as 350,000 had not voted at all their silence was taken as assent.

The same means was used by his nephew, Napoleon III., in his rise to power. He was constitutionally elected President of the Second French Republic in 1848, and forthwith laid plans for restoring the empire of his uncle. A national plebiscite was arranged for the week ending December 21, 1851. Every precaution was taken to eliminate republican elements and to weaken any influence which might vote against the scheme. Officials who were not prepared to concur in writing were removed in time. The Press was closely censored. Morny, the Minister of the Interior, became the French Goebbels, if the anachronism be allowed. The circular just before the plebiscite was a gem : “ Liberty of conscience, but the resolute and consistent use of every allowable means of influence and persuasion,” it told the local officials, “ that is what I expect of you.” It was decided, by 7,500,000 to 640,000, to delegate to Napoleon the right of drawing up a new Constitution. The nation, that is, abdicated all political power. A second plebiscite at the end of 1852 acknowledged him Emperor Napoleon III.

Both Hitler and Mussolini have shown a similar fondness for plebiscites. The Nazi rise to power was crowned by a series of them. On November 12, 1933, the nation

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voted that Hitler had restored Germany's honour, and endorsed his foreign policy of leaving the League of Nations and the Disarmament Conference. Ninety-six per cent. of the votes were for the proposal. Even prisoners in the concentration camps voted for it. Nearly a year later Hitler asked for popular approval of the action taken by the Cabinet in making him Leader and Chancellor. Over 38,000,000 voted for the proposal. There is little doubt that both plebiscites would have shown a favourable majority even if they had been conducted freely. But both were preceded and accompanied by Napoleonic terrorism.

An "Election" in modern Italy is in the nature of a plebiscite. In 1934, for example, the Fascist list of Deputies for the new Chamber was submitted to a plebiscite. Ten million accepted it, and only 16,000 rejected it. No alternative list, of course, was put forward. It mattered little, for the Chamber was itself a mere rubber-stamp, endorsing in batches the decrees already passed by the government. At the end of 1938 plans were made to replace it by a Chamber of Fascios and Corporations—an equally carefully hand-picked body. This was inaugurated in March 1939. During the minorities dispute in Czecho-Slovakia, it was Mussolini who cried first and loudest for "Plebisciti."

Recent times afford one striking example of the valuable use of the plebiscite for this purpose of settling a disputed frontier. The Treaty of Versailles provided that the valuable territory of the Saar should be given to France, but should be administered by a Commission of the League of Nations for a period of fifteen years. After that a plebiscite was to be held whereby the inhabitants could decide whether to remain under the Commission,

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be incorporated with France, or return to Germany. The plebiscite was duly held in January, 1935, by secret ballot, the area being policed during the period by an international force of British, Italian, Swedish, and Dutch troops. Over half a million people were entitled to vote, and 97.9 per cent. of them did. Of these, 90.8 per cent. favoured a return to Germany, and nearly 9 per cent. wanted to remain under the Commission. The territory was reunited with Germany as from March 1, 1935. There can be little objection to the plebiscite if it is used for this purpose and carried out under these conditions.¹ In a case like this the immediate desire of the inhabitants themselves is all that really matters ; and a free plebiscite is the most direct way of expressing it. Even so, a completely free choice is extremely difficult to secure. Where there is a general likelihood that a majority will—on nationalistic or other grounds—vote for the side which happens to be a dictatorship, there is a natural reluctance of moderate or indifferent men to take any action during the discussion which will endanger their own safety when the dictatorship takes over the administration. In this way, the scale is tipped in favour of the side which is prepared to be intolerant ; and a slight majority may tend to become an overwhelming majority.

All these devices, Initiative, Referendum, Recall, and Plebiscite, have the effect of short-circuiting the representative system. They remove discussion and decision—to some extent at least—from the representative assembly to the electorate itself. It may be argued that this is only the general trend of all modern political arrangements. Just as the single-party States have re-

¹ Plebiscites were held in disputed areas immediately after the War—North Schleswig, East Prussia, Upper Silesia—but not under equally good conditions.

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moved final decision from popular assemblies to the party and its leader, so do the party caucus in America and the tendency to form "National Governments" in Britain and France reduce parliamentary debate to a mere formality, unlikely to affect the final decisions of government. There is a recent tendency in this country to act on the assumption that, in some matters of policy at least, the function of Parliament is not so much to contribute to the making of a decision, as to give the Cabinet a mandate to make any decision it deems necessary, in the knowledge that it will afterwards be endorsed by Parliament. This assumption especially applies to foreign affairs. Throughout the great crisis of the autumn of 1938, the Cabinet—or at least the Inner Cabinet—acted on the principle, as the *Times* put it, that at such difficult moments Members of Parliament "have to wait until matters reach the stage when they will have the opportunity, which is never withheld or unduly delayed in this country, of voting for or against a record and a final balance-sheet submitted to them." Parliament is expected to register approval of facts already accomplished, without having had the chance to take any active part in accomplishing them.

Now this point of view is a reasonable and in many ways defensible belief. It can be argued that in dealing with other States whose governments are not expected to consult any one before reaching a decision, a democratic government would be unduly handicapped if it had to pause at every step and explain its attitude to the Houses of Parliament. Its decision may rest upon information which it would be most undesirable to make public at that moment. Public opinion might not be able to make itself clear in time. It may be, as one writer has

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phrased it, that "in these days of instantaneous communication, immense armaments, huge constituencies, and large, compact majorities, we have not the time to make up our minds when the emergency is already on us." It may be that modern problems and modern conditions demand that a far larger degree of free discretion be left to the men in power. It can be argued, with some conviction, that this slight loss of popular control is the price that democracies have to pay when confronted with vast, totalitarian dictatorships.

But if democracies are going to abdicate this measure of control which their representatives can wield over government, they must not do so blindly or vaguely. It must be made quite clear in what aspects of policy this wide discretion will be allowed. Is it to be allowed only in foreign affairs? And to all foreign affairs? Or is it to be a creed of "emergency measures," and is wide discretion to be similarly allowed in time of internal emergency—financial, or social, or otherwise? Much of the agitation against the Official Secrets Acts, for example, is based on a feeling that they allow too much discretion to government in censorship of the Press. In Britain "freedom of the Press" has always meant freedom to print anything, on the understanding that the author, publisher, and printer may be subsequently punished if their publication has offended against the laws of libel, copyright, or contempt of court. There has been no attempt since the seventeenth century, until the Official Secrets Act, to invert the process by *previously* forbidding any particular publication. A citizen could publish anything—but at his own risk. The Official Secrets Acts, it is believed, afford a loophole for strict control of discussion and of the spread of information, should

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a government ever desire to use it. The Sandys case brought the issue to the front in 1938, and Mr. Dingle Foot brought into the Commons a Bill to reform the Official Secrets Acts.¹

It is always a danger for democracy to grant any powers without having its eyes wide open. "Popular mandates" of any kind—as well as plebiscites—can easily be turned against their givers. France, with her Napoleonic experience, is more constantly aware of this than Britain. On the other hand, as has already often been emphasized, there is a real place for trust and discretion in democratic institutions. The one great means of reconciling control with trust is free, popularly organized political party. To improve our representative institutions, we must improve the structure and safeguard the spirit of our political parties. Then, if the short chain by which Parliament controls the government has to be in any way lengthened, at least it cannot be lengthened farther than the long chain by which public opinion controls party. And, at the same time, the short chain will be strengthened, even if it has to be lengthened.

How, then, can the structure of parties be improved, and their spirit safeguarded? It is not the purpose of this book to provide a ready-made answer, for that is beyond the abilities of any one writer. Methods will be adequate only if discovered and evolved in practice. The aim of this book is discussion rather than ready-made decision. So the most it attempts is to indicate in passing some general principles, and to offer for further discussion a few general suggestions.

Firstly, party loyalty must not be made into a closed

¹ A pamphlet by Mr. Kingsley Martin, *Fascism, Democracy and the Press* (1938), has summarized the position and the arguments with great skill.

circle. Its organization must not be over-centralized. The powerful party caucus can become a menace to free government. It has sometimes been thought not enough for a popular representative to pledge himself at elections to the established party programme. He has sometimes, in America, been required to undertake that, if elected, he will always obey any decision made by a majority of the party's parliamentary representatives, in secret conclave. This clearly strengthens the party as a "battle-fellowship" for winning elections; and gives its leaders, if in opposition, great bargaining-power. And the representative, it is true, still has the opportunity to influence decision within the party caucus. But the new fact is that decision is now made by the majority of a majority—which may, in fact, be only a very small minority. Parliamentary debate then becomes quite unreal in respect of every decision so made and obeyed. The member cannot be open to conviction by the debate, or by change of circumstances or new information since the decision of the caucus. The governing majority need not even trouble to expound or defend its measures, except for the sake of outside appearances. This "indiscriminate support of all ministers" was described by Edmund Burke as "a general, previous sanction to misgovernment." Since other parties will probably be forced to form a similar caucus, in self-defence, parties will become themselves totalitarian, and between them there will be points of conflict but none of contact. Both policies become predetermined and immovable. There will be two opposing fronts, instead of a complex, subtle interpenetration of forces and an interaction of ideas. And that spells disaster for free discussion and truly representative government. This critical situation

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is apt to arise wherever one party has a very definite and exclusive programme to achieve, for which representatives are prepared to sacrifice their individual independence : that is, when a party becomes a " movement " and its programme a " cause."

Secondly, party must guard against this tendency by keeping a balance between its social aspect and its political.¹ It is a social group, just as a tennis club is a social group ; it is a propagandist association, just as the League of Nations Union or the Anti-Vivisectionist Society are propagandist ; it is a force of education, a debating society, a creator of public opinion. This is its social purpose. But it is also a fighting machine for winning elections, a power-organization whose aim is to capture the political government of the State. This is its political purpose. And both elements are essential to its nature, making it unique amongst all social groups. It must be conscious of its second purpose quite as much as of its first, but it must harmonize them. Absence of this harmony and internal balance is fatal to representative government, as may be shown by the experience of pre-Hitlerist Germany.

As one writer has said, " the duty of the parties to supply a government with a basis was not appreciated. All that was appreciated was the fact that by the constitution a ministry was a technical necessity. . . . The resultant ministry was in one sense still a ministry *imposed*—by the constitution—on the parties, and in another it was a mere concession by the parties to parliamentary practice. It was not regarded as the executive agent of the *policy* of the coalition which supplied it ; it was the suitor to the coalition for a parliamentary majority to

¹ See page 60.

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enable it to exist to perform a national purpose.”¹ Just as the ideal of democratic method is that decision should emerge from free discussion, so the political ideal of representative government is that the ministry should be an emanation from Parliament. Party must secure this. The parties of Weimar Germany did not. And the way to Hitler was paved with bad conventions. The parties—themselves the direct carry-over from pre-war Imperialist Germany—prolonged into the new democracy the situation where a ministry was imposed upon the representative assembly by an external and separate force. The power purpose of party was sacrificed to its social purpose. The ministry led a separate existence from the coalition of parties from which it should have emanated. Its main concern, therefore, was to play off the parties one against the other, and it survived only by its ability to do so. It was not party government, but government in spite of party. Constant appeals were made by leading statesmen to the spirit of nationalism and patriotism, *above* the heads of parties. So the appeal made by Hitler was nothing very unfamiliar.

Thirdly, voters must concern themselves particularly with exercising their choice of future legislators through the process of nomination in their various political parties. Even if wider discretionary powers are necessary for government, it is all the more important for the citizen to make sure that reliable and able men are promoted by their party. Voters must learn to find, choose, and promote men whose personalities inspire trust, whose honesty, capacity and general agreement with party aims are such as can demand the confidence of most members

¹ R. T. Clarke, *The Fall of the German Republic*, pp. 130-31. See also page 68 above.

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of the party. The strongest argument against all methods of direct democracy is that they tend to weaken the sense of responsibility of the representative, at the same time as they divert the attention of the citizen and the political reformer away from seeking improved methods of finding trustworthy representatives. This is the task which demands greatest consideration amongst all modern democracies—with the possible exception of Switzerland, whose smallness and deep-rooted traditions make her in every way an exceptional case. The citizen must learn to scrutinize the character of his political trustees with the same care as he scrutinizes his financial trustees. He has nothing to gain from a political “South Sea Bubble.”

This sounds straightforward, but it is not. Real dilemmas may arise for the individual voter. He may devote much time and work to promoting the activities of his local party association. When election time comes, he may find that he feels greater personal respect for the character of the candidate put up by another party. Or a well-known person may appear, and stand as an Independent candidate. The candidate of his own party may be, on that occasion, neither impressive nor likable. What is he to do? Is he to frustrate his past activity by voting against his own party? Or is he to be a good party man first, even if it involves the constituency being represented by a person of inferior character? Each citizen will, of course, solve the dilemma in accordance with his own personality. He may even decide to evade the issue by not voting at all on this occasion, but that would be to shirk the issue. The solution might be to vote for that candidate who inspired greatest personal confidence, and seemed most likely to exercise his own

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independent judgment in deciding complicated issues : but to continue to work for that party whose general principles and programme attracted him most, doing everything in his power to ensure that a really trustworthy candidate should be promoted by it at the next election. If every voter did this, the whole personnel of the parliament and of the government would rapidly be improved in character. And such an improvement is the greatest service which the personality of the ordinary voter can render to representative government.

Fourthly, the voter must scrutinize equally carefully the programme of the party for which he works and votes. He must judge it, not only by the desirability of its proposals but also by their practicability. General promises must never be taken at their face value. An electoral programme should offer constructive proposals. It is a liability, and a good party will see that it is a limited liability. No voter should give his vote "for an undertaking which shall in due time be revealed." And it should be remembered that in practical politics it is the short-range programme which really matters most, and which is more likely to find practical expression. Circumstances—and parties—may change very considerably before a long-range programme can be put into effect.

For the individual voter, there is only one golden rule. "Work and vote for the party which attracts you most, but never submerge your own personality completely in it : be a partisan, but not a blind one."

CHAPTER VI

PRINCIPLE AND INTEREST

“Right you are !” cried the Rat, starting up. “We’ll rescue the poor unhappy animal ! We’ll convert him ! He’ll be the most converted Toad that ever was before we’ve done with him !”. . . . “Very well, then,” said the Badger firmly, rising to his feet. “Since you won’t yield to persuasion, we’ll try what force can do.”

It was suggested ¹ that modern democracy was the result of a change in the theory of political representation. Modern liberal-democracy was impossible until it was generally believed that it is personality and not property which ought to be represented in politics. In time it became clear that this belief involved such institutions as free elections, secret ballot, and the principle of one man, one vote. (The principle of one woman, one vote, is not yet accepted in many countries except Britain and her Dominions, U.S.A., and Russia.) No sooner had these necessary arrangements for the expression of personality in politics been made, however, than it also became clear that they were workable only by means of political parties. It is, then, political parties which are actually represented most directly in politics, for it is they who promote candidates for elections, and they whose leaders eventually form the actual government in a

¹ Page 56, above.

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democratic State. The problem now arises, whether personality is really represented at all by parties ; it has been suggested that parties either embody some great transcendent principle, which it is the party's mission to put into practice—even at the expense of the welfare of individual members—or else that parties really represent group interests, based on property rights, so that again it is only a fiction that they are directly concerned with human personality as such. Both these suggestions must now be examined.

When English parties were based upon a real division of religious and constitutional principle in the seventeenth century, the result was not free government but civil war. A real division of principle, a fundamental difference of creed, makes a party system impossible. "The Party System does not consist," Mr. G. K. Chesterton once said, "as some suppose, of two parties, but of one. If there were two real parties, there could be no system." The English party system has worked because, in the main, even non-conformity was content to conform in many ways ; and because conformity was national and had learned, by the eighteenth century, to distinguish between Protestant and Papal dissent. When men had learned to tolerate even religious dissent, political toleration was an easy development. But when parties regard themselves as protagonists in a conflict of religious or philosophical principle, no satisfactory system is possible. They have an intense intellectual conviction that at a comparatively early stage in the party conflict they have to dig their toes in and refuse to go beyond that point. No further compromise is possible, because further compromise is of the Devil. It is a "thus far and no farther" attitude. Beyond that certain point dis-

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cussion becomes too heated to be fruitful ; agreement and voluntary decision become inconceivable ; and men are ready to break heads rather than count them.

Being absolute, totalitarian, " all in," this attitude seeks expression in the " all in " State ; whether it be in the Puritan " rule of the Godly," as under Cromwell, or in the Nazi " rule of the elect." Both would agree that government should be " of the people " and " for the people," but they would add, " by the best people." And the party of the " best people " is known by the principles it holds, which are absolutely right. They are a fanatical party, formed on abstract principles, and it is their mission to put these principles into practice. When a party becomes a movement, it must weaken or even destroy the party system. The Weimar Republic of Germany was destroyed by National Socialism because it was a movement.

Each party of Weimar Germany thought of itself as representing a *Weltanschauung*, a complete philosophy of life ; and indeed they came nearer to it than any other group of political parties in history. Even a coalition was regarded as something disgraceful. The parties of the Right—the German Nationals who were the successors of the old Conservatives, and the German People's Party who were the old National Liberals—represented the tradition of Bismarck. They symbolized pre-war, Prussianized, Imperial Germany, with its alliance between landed aristocracy, militarist and imperial cliques, and the big industrialists. They were opposed to democracy, and were anti-Socialist and Nationalistic. To the Left of these were the Democrats, heirs of the old Progressive Liberals, who represented the Liberal-democratic philosophy—parliamentarianism, free trade,

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social reform, internationalism. The Social Democrats and the Independents (united in 1922) formed the more extreme Left. To the Left even of these were the Communists ; all parties of the working class, but differing in their willingness to force immediate Socialist changes. These three groups represented social classes and interests, as well as the three definite philosophies of Prussian Nationalism, Liberalism, and Socialism. But the Centre Party, perhaps the decisive element in the party system of Germany, cut across all these social and economic divisions, and was united solely by the social principles of Roman Catholicism as expressed in Papal decrees. The Centre was socially the most mixed party of all. It could support the Socialists to some extent, and the parties of the Right to some extent, but with each it soon reached a point beyond which it could not go.

The relative strength of these parties enabled the Centre Party to establish itself as the chief governmental party in the Republic. Every government was a coalition, and the Centre became the almost indispensable element in any effective coalition. The history of the political groupings has been called "the gradual sharpening of temporarily dulled conflicts."¹ The moderate elements gradually declined. The revolutionary working-class movement grew. The Centre and the Social Democrats resisted all disintegrating forces. And upon this scene of growing tension and approaching deadlock came the movement of National Socialism.

There was, indeed, a certain wide basis for possible agreement amongst the parties. Many of their differences were of the "more or less variety." All were Nationalist, and wanted a united *Volksstaat*. But they based their

¹ Erich Roll, *Spotlight on Germany*, p. 242.

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popular appeal exclusively upon their differences, and magnified and glorified the opposition between their principles ; and this in a parliamentary system where coalition was always necessary. It was characteristic that it was the two extremist parties which inserted the word "national" in their names—the National Conservatives and the National Socialists. And in Germany, as one writer has remarked,¹ to call any association "national" is to suggest a subtle sort of exclusiveness, to imply that its members are somehow truer Germans than non-members. It implies an assertion of exclusive patriotism, of particular devotion to the traditional German national idols of Luther, Frederick the Great, and Bismarck. Perhaps the nearest English approach to the implication is when an English Tory orator drapes a Union Jack in front of his soap-box.

The practical effect of this attitude, which regarded the parties as completely separated by barriers of principle, was the attempt to appeal to "the Nation" over the head of party and Parliament. "The Nation" was regarded as a patriotic body, unhampered by party ties, capable of deciding and acting in spite of party leaders. In a good party system, every national leader should be a party leader, just as every party leader should be a potential national leader. But of Bruening Mr. Clarke writes :

"He did not seek to consolidate all the middle-class parties into a government party ; he merely sought to neutralize their possible hostility and appeal to their interests. He claimed to be a national leader, but there is no place in the constitution for a national leader who is not also the leader of a party or a coalition majority. . . ."

¹ R. T. Clarke, *The Fall of the German Republic*, p. 69.

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In fact, the practical outcome of the German party system was that the Nationalists were able to dictate policy without accepting responsibility. And a divorce between power and responsibility means the end of representative government.

We are driven, then, to the almost cynical conclusion that whilst a certain amount of principle is desirable in the make-up of political party, too much of this ingredient may be disastrous. It is certainly desirable that men should be bound together by ties of common opinion if they are to act concertedly. But, if these opinions are fanatically held and uncompromisingly practised, they produce party warfare rather than a party system, and party as a useful agency of representative government is destroyed. There must be certain wider and more comprehensive principles of action, transcending party principles and accepted by most men of all parties, before the party system can become a satisfactory method of government. This would seem to be possible only in a homogeneous community conscious of its real unity, and so fundamentally at one that it can, in Lord Balfour's phrase, "safely afford to bicker."

Equally destructive of a party system is the materialist idea of political party. A party represents primarily group interests and property rights. A show of principle is little more than a practical expedient to catch popular support—a delusion, useful for keeping the party together, but concealing the real underlying forces and springs of party. Marxism regards any political party in a capitalist democracy as inevitably a class party—which will always in the last resort show its true character by using the machinery of the State in the class struggle.

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"The executive of the modern State," declared Marx, "is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie." So, regardless of the particular motives or sincerity of isolated individual citizens, the politics of modern society, taken as a whole, will of necessity be politics of power and of material group interest. The aim of Marxist politics is, therefore, to abolish the party system, which it regards as the deceptive outcome of bourgeois thought, and to replace it by the dictatorship of an exclusively proletarian party, to "expropriate the capitalists." Belief that the capitalist class is so strongly entrenched that force alone can eventually expel it is inherent in Marxist thought. Marxism expressly repudiates the liberal-democratic method. Professor Laski in his recent writings has been driven to stress this fact more and more. "Capitalism is presented with the choice of co-operating in the effort at socialist experiment, or of fighting it; and I have given reasons for believing that it may well prefer the alternative of fighting."¹ "Both the principles and the interests underlying party structure have undergone a radical change. On the one side, there stands a party which, broadly speaking, represents a faith in the private ownership of the means of production, on the other is a party committed to the view that the system of private ownership has broken down, and that the socialization of those means is fundamental to national well-being. . . . Each is anxious, in fact, to discover the maximum common ground because neither desires to pursue a policy which would be regarded by the other as a challenge to democracy. But neither has seriously confronted the issue of whether the uneasy marriage between capitalism and

¹ *Democracy in Crisis* (1931), p. 233.

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democracy is psychologically possible in the period of capitalism's decline."¹

This belief is so important and so relevant to our subject that it demands further consideration. Mr. A. L. Rowse even welcomes this tendency for political parties to coincide with economic class divisions, as making political issues more real to the electorate. "The reality of political representation," he writes, "is to be found in the representation of interests. Those are what is represented in parliament—not so many haphazard collocations of individuals, geographically determined. That is the *method* by which the interests are represented, and as a method it has much in favour of it." A party, he declares, "is at bottom a complex of group interests ; it may have also an historical tradition and a programme. And it is essential, if one is to understand its policy and action, to realize what classes its interests are bound up with, and what precisely it represents in the community."²

Now, there is clearly enough truth, at least, in these general statements to make them worthy of consideration. But they must, I think, be modified by three other considerations.

First, the very fact that party is a *complex* of group interests should warn us against identifying any political party too closely with one class. Admittedly, the present grouping in Britain seems to indicate a tendency to identify party with class. But even here it is very far from complete. In America, it is still further from the

¹ *Parliamentary Government in England* (1938), p. 24. Mr. John Strachey is wont to emphasize the class nature of party even more than Professor Laski. See his *What are we to do ?* chapter xiv. "It is an association of individuals like-minded because they are members or agents of a particular social class," etc.

² *Politics and the Younger Generation*, pp. 76, 93-94.

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truth. And great muddle-headedness can result from thinking of a class as a clearly marked out group. Here is Leon Trotsky's shrewd criticism of Stalinist rule in Russia. "In reality classes are heterogeneous ; they are torn by inner antagonisms, and arrive at the solution of common problems no otherwise than through an inner struggle of tendencies, groups and parties. It is possible, with certain qualifications, to concede that 'a party is part of a class.' But since a class has many 'parts'—some look forward and some back—one and the same class may create several parties. For the same reason, one party may rest upon parts of different classes." ¹ To suppress all parts of the dominant party except that favoured by the leaders of the bureaucracy is certainly to weaken the party as a "movement," even if it strengthens it temporarily as an organization. The great inherent problems of reconciling internal interests must then be solved by imposing uniformity rather than by persuasion and accommodation.

Secondly, the social issue to-day, in so far as it affects politics rather than pure economic theory, is not the clear-cut issue between private ownership on the one hand and state ownership on the other. There is the large borderline of State control, which both sides accept to a considerable extent. This is at least some common ground, and this can often be used as a transition stage from private ownership to communal ownership. Furthermore, as Professor Laski admits, each side is anxious to discover this common ground, and neither wishes to challenge democratic methods. Indeed, the great lesson which modern Socialists can learn from the experience of Russia is that communal ownership is of

¹ *The Revolution Betrayed*, p. 252.

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little value unless strenuous efforts are made at the same time to secure democratic control of the State which is given this great power ; and economic equality without political liberty is just as undesirable as that condition of political liberty without economic equality, which is so strongly condemned by Communists.

Finally, it may be that to preserve political liberty at all costs is the best way eventually to achieve economic equality. If there is this great class conflict inside modern democracies, it may well be that the working of a party system is the best means of resolving it. "The disposition of parties only reflects the economic conditions of which they are the expression," says Professor Laski. But democracy, we decided, is essentially a political method, the method of free discussion. This is the best method of resolving economic differences, and it is rash to assume that it will not be used for this purpose. Men often act rationally even where their own interests are concerned. Or, to put it in another way, if the transition from State control to State ownership of our economic resources and organization *must* involve the destruction of democracy, then men must consider very carefully if that transition is worth this sacrifice. But before doing even that, men must certainly make sure that the dilemma is a real one.¹ For the dilemma depends upon certain predictions—predictions that the classes entrenched in power (whatever that may precisely mean) *will* be able to resist the expressed will of the majority, that they will

¹ Mr. R. Bassett has discussed this point in greater detail in *The Essentials of Parliamentary Democracy*, chap. v. As he remarks, this disbelief in the powers of reason and discussion to resolve differences corresponds to the arguments of cynics, militarists, and nationalists against all international efforts to resolve the conflicts of nationalism by methods of discussion ; and it would seem difficult to accept one set of arguments and reject the other. So let the debater beware !

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want to resist at all costs, and that discussion and persuasion will prove of no avail. And it is very doubtful if these predictions are based upon enough evidence to make them certainties or even probabilities, rather than simply possibilities.

Certainly these three considerations must be set against any economic interpretation of political party or the party system before any valid conclusion can be reached.

It can be readily admitted, however, that party may derive considerable strength and consistency from being partially identified with particular economic interests. The parties of eighteenth-century England recognized this, and contrived to capture the general support of one of the great "interests"—the landed interest, the moneyed interest, and even the dissenting interest. And so the country gentry and landowners were the backbone of Tory strength, as the moneyed and commercial interests (together with most of the dissenters) were the main support of the Whigs. But the separateness of these various "interests" must not be exaggerated. They all interlocked and overlapped. They never definitely coincided with any social or economic class. They were rather cross-sections of public opinion out of which party and group policies emerged. There was a strong communal interest transcending mere occupational groups.

In modern Britain, the landowning and moneyed interests, "big business" in general, are undoubtedly the main support of the Conservative Party, just as the trade unions and the Co-operative movement are the core of the strength of the Labour Party. But which of these parties gains an electoral majority at any election depends chiefly on the large, borderline, marginal mass of voters.

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It is they who normally represent that section of "public opinion" which votes differently according to circumstances. If their interest lies theoretically on only one side or the other, they certainly are not conscious of this. Nor are they merely apathetic, uninterested; they also include a vast number of voters who are non-party in their allegiance, independent of mind, disinterested in outlook. They include a large part of the professional classes—teachers, doctors, lawyers, writers, clergy—who are prepared to vote for either party whose policy and record elicits their sympathy at an election. It is wrong to assume that all who are not "good party men" are apathetic in politics. It might be much better both for political life and for these people themselves if they could be persuaded to take a more consistent and energetic part in the activities of one or other of the political parties. I believe that it would. But they are not, in these days, an element of public opinion which is indifferent to the great issues of politics. They will respond vigorously to any party which is prepared to give them an intelligent and intelligible lead. They are shrewd judges at election time, though they are apt to plead that they are too busy to play any regular part in party politics. Incidentally, the public spirit of many such men finds expression in local government more than in national politics.

But whereas a certain basis of economic group-interest is a desirable element in the make-up of a political party, yet the complete absorption of a party by a single interest or class would destroy the usefulness of party in representative government. When American parties split into slave-owners and abolitionists, civil war was inevitable.

In trying to describe political party as it exists to-day

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in the democratic States, it is easy to be misled by insisting too exclusively upon either its philosophical or its economic basis. It is essentially a political thing, subject to the influence of various pressure groups. Some of these pressure groups have an economic or occupational basis. There must always be some impact of economics upon politics ; and free association, which is part of the democratic method, will always lead to the formation of such pressure groups in a democratic society. But so long as there is a variety of such pressure groups, some based upon principle as well as others based upon interest, and so long as a party is not completely absorbed by any one of these groups, then party can fulfil its legitimate purposes in representative government. It is the amalgamation and interaction of these groups which form public opinion ; and political party, by registering the pressure of these groups, expresses public opinion. These groups—whether like the Anti-Vivisection Society, the League of Nations Union, or the Council for the Defence of Civil Liberties ; or like the British Medical Association, the Farmers' Union, or the various trades unions—can, by agitation and persuasion, find some spokesman in Parliament from amongst the men of different parties. If the issue is urgent and important enough, one party or the other will eventually absorb it as an item of its own party programme. And the existence of these groups gives party a consistency and durability of its own.

Some thinkers have advocated the abolition of permanent political parties, on the grounds that " as soon as a party (were it created for the noblest object) perpetuates itself it tends invariably towards power, and as soon as it makes that its end, its master passion is to maintain itself against all opposition, with no scruples as

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to the means.”¹ It is suggested that political party should be deprived of its power-motives and its governmental aspect, and restricted to the rôle of propagandist society or pressure group, dissolving as soon as its immediate and limited purpose is achieved. Instead of a party Cabinet, there could be a general executive committee ; instead of ministers, departmental committees reporting directly to Parliament ; instead of a party leader as Prime Minister, a man chosen from the general body of the House.²

It is clear that such a system of temporary parties, with no administrative responsibility, would fail to secure that emergence of decision from discussion which is the vital element in representative government. The selection and presentation of candidates for election, and that valuable work of integrating and amalgamating public opinion by “previous accommodation,” could not be adequately done by parties of this limited, temporary, and exclusive kind. Rigid adherence to a particular single principle, as may be learnt from Weimar Germany, may prove an even greater menace to free government than the power-motive of parties. Instability, hesitancy, and futility are a greater danger to representative government in the modern world than the occasional unrepresentativeness of parties. The burden of complaint against the party system in modern times is its slowness and cumbersomeness. Dictatorship appeals to impatience, no less than to intolerance. And it is difficult to see how this admitted handicap of the party system would be anything but aggravated by a system of shifting groups and temporary associations.

¹ M. Ostrogorski, *Democracy and the Organization of Political Parties*.

² C. A. Morton, *An Indictment of the Party System*, makes these suggestions.

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To divorce agitation from the responsibility of government is contrary to the whole democratic method. And a system of pressure groups, exercising direct pressure—either outside Parliament upon the individual candidate, or internally upon Parliament itself—while conceivable perhaps in a period of very gradual reform, is inconceivable in a time of urgent and general reconstruction such as the present.

In short, political party is the necessary buffer, the essential shock-absorber, between the various pressure groups and the system of representative government. Party is a general contractor at the service of these groups, as soon as they can exert enough pressure. It is an honest broker, a vehicle for "omnibus programmes."¹ It tries to harmonize diverse issues of politics. It contrives to relate them to one another, so that the voter is confronted not with a perplexing assortment of issues and suggestions, but with a more or less clear alternative of policy.

"In communities," writes one great critic of party, "where individual liberty is not yet achieved, interests and ideas are not sufficiently differentiated, and men feel the need of sharing pains and pleasures, aversions and attachments, of not parting from one another for fear of losing their way in life."² There lies the main defence of political party. The average citizen must not be

¹ This is the main characteristic of parties which M. Ostrogorski attacks. "Party as a general contractor for the numerous and varied problems present and to come, awaiting solution, would give place to special organizations, limited to particular objects. It would cease to be a medley of groups and individuals united by a fictitious agreement, and would constitute an association, the homogeneity of which would be ensured by its single aim." *Op. cit.*, vol ii., p. 658. It is important to remember that even a fictitious agreement and an imaginary harmony of purpose may be valuable in politics.

² *Ibid.*, p. 683.

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thought of as more logical and rationalistic than he is. Politics, in seeking to express the personality of the citizen, must allow for force of habit, laziness of mind, affection for familiarity and tradition, a tendency to take sides and to remain sentimentally loyal to a cause even when it is out of date. "The generality of people," said Edmund Burke, "are fifty years, at least, behind-hand in their politics." A single-issue group seems to be incapable of evoking much enthusiasm from many citizens. Human nature seems to desire something more permanent and traditional, round which certain ideas and sentiments can form and accumulate, just as particles of limestone slowly gather to form a stalactite. Things which "grow" in that way are apt to prove much less brittle than they look.

Even more disastrous to the satisfactory working of the party system would be the separation of "interests" from "ideas," which the elimination of big organized parties would produce. The single-issue group would be based upon either principle or interest, but not upon both at once. Clearness and simplicity of aim brings an unwillingness to compromise. Sharpness is not far removed from bitterness. The conclusion of this description of party is that when a political party is based upon both principle and interest, however incongruous it may sometimes seem, the one somehow tends to modify and mollify the other ; and party, not being a single-purpose group, does not fall into the hands of single-minded men. It may be that sheer vagueness in politics accounts for the ability of the English people to work the party system so well. "Why do the stupid people always win and the clever people always lose?" asked Walter Bagehot. "I need hardly say that in real sound stupidity the English

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people are unrivalled. You'll find more wit and better wit in an Irish street now than would keep Westminster Hall in humour for five weeks. . . . In fact, what we opprobriously call stupidity, though not an enlivening quality in common society, is nature's favourite resource for preserving steadiness of conduct and consistency of opinion." Perhaps that's it.

CHAPTER VII

FOLLOW MY LEADER :

"O, yes, yes, in *there*," said Toad impatiently. "I'd have said anything in *there*. You're so eloquent, dear Badger, and so moving, and so convincing, and put all your points so frightfully well—you can do what you like with me in *there*, and you know it. But I've been searching my mind since, and going over things in it, and I find that I'm not a bit sorry or repentant really, so it's no earthly good saying I am ; now, is it ?"

"AND to manage them you must have a good cry," said Taper. "All now depends upon a good cry. . . ."

"I am all for a religious cry," said Taper. "It means nothing, and, if successful, does not interfere with business when we are in." In this way conversed Taper and Tadpole, the two famous wire-pullers and party-managers in Disraeli's *Coningsby*.

Taper and Tadpole were well acquainted with an important truth about human nature which has been only incidentally mentioned so far, and which deserves some further consideration. It is that the interest and support of men and women in politics are not evoked only, or even mainly, by reasonable, rational arguments. If men and women are to be effectively "managed" in politics, some appeal must be made, it seems, to their emotions, feelings, and non-rational impulses.

Political parties, in fact, are psychological entities, no less than social and political and economic organizations.

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They exist as a complex of impulses and emotions in the minds of men as well as in the form of local and parliamentary associations.

Herr Hitler realized this great truth during the war, and his whole political method is built upon it. "Most people are so 'feminine' in nature and outlook," he writes, "that their thoughts and actions are governed more by feeling and sentiment than by reasoned consideration." He defines leadership as "the ability to move masses of men," and devotes much of *Mein Kampf* to a discussion of the best methods of propaganda and mass-suggestion.

The mass-meetings, carefully stage-managed ; the great rallies, demonstrations, marches, songs : all these are only the practical Nazi applications of this principle. Even before Hitler, Mussolini had learnt from the Catholic Church in Italy the value of mass-suggestion of this kind. But by the skill of Hitler and Goebbels and the application of Teutonic thoroughness the method was carried to a higher pitch of perfection in Germany. It should be noted that the Communist Party had developed and applied the same methods to politics in Russia, even before Mussolini. Communism has helped the progress of Fascism in more ways than one.¹

Only in recent years have psychologists seriously studied the forces of mass-suggestion, or group interaction, in any systematic way. Roughly speaking, it can be said that parties work upon the individual mind by the same process as other organized groups—by suggestion, sympathy, and imitation. They act by suggestion, in the sense that political beliefs are induced in or communicated

¹ And, it may be added, Capitalist commercial advertising has much to teach all political movements in the arts of propaganda.

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to a person, independently of logical reasoning or conscious thought. Certain ideas are made to become associated together in men's minds, so that recalling one idea automatically recalls other particular ideas. A name, a flag, a slogan, a colour, a tune, can all become associated with particular notions or feelings, and the sight or sound of these symbols induces these notions or feelings. Every popular movement of religion, nationalism, advertising, or propaganda uses some or all of these methods. Democratic parties consistently use these methods—as witness the use of a party colour, slogans, and demonstrations at election times. But their psychological appeal is very half-hearted, compared with the appeal of Fascist and Communist parties.

The forces of sympathy and imitation are much more completely exploited by the methods of Communism and Fascism. The mass-meeting is the essential technique. Skilful flood-lighting and spot-lighting, military bands, banners and uniformed parades, community singing and marching, organized cheering, fierce tub-thumping oratory, and every device which can help to produce mass-emotion and hysteria are the regular methods of the Fascist and Nazi Parties. "Mass assemblies," says Hitler, "are necessary, because in attending them the individual . . . receives his first impression of a larger community, and this strengthens and encourages most people. He submits himself to the magic influences of what is called 'mass-suggestion.' The desires, longings, and even the strength of thousands is accumulated in the mind of each individual present." Anger, hatred, and fear—which are not unassociated with one another—are the easiest emotions to arouse by mass-suggestion. And these are precisely the emotions which the Nazi

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Party wanted to stir up in Germany : anger with the Treaty of Versailles, hatred of the Jews, fear of France. Once a sufficiently large number have been infected with mass-emotions in this way, the force of imitation begins to work. The general impulse to conform to the behaviour of the crowd, to "follow my leader," to do "the done thing," and "be in the swim"—these forces create a great tide of conduct, flowing in one particular direction. Only the braver individuals refuse to conform, They even resist the tide. They stand out. They can be separated out and dealt with apart—in concentration camps, firing squads, mock trials, or simply individually beaten up, dosed with castor oil, or whatever other patent method is preferred by the ingenuity of the party toughs. The methods of Al Capone come into their own. A new habit of politics is assimilated.

That is the order of method : persuasion—mass-suggestion—mass-emotion—mass-conformity—brute force. "I have not done away with Democracy," says Herr Hitler, "but only simplified it." And the method of simplification is the great principle of Leadership. *Vozhd, Duce, Führer* : these are the new Messiahs.

The psychological appeal of all leadership and party organization is that they are able to satisfy both the self-giving and the self-assertive impulses in men. The party can become an object of devotion and service. It can become an outlet for the need to have something to respect and work for—"a cause." It can evoke the unselfish and idealistic impulses of men and women. In so far as it makes high demands—of obedience to the leader and mergence of individual wills in his—it appeals directly to primitive and almost tribal instincts. The leader assumes all responsibility. Bewilderment and the

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strain of the effort to understand very difficult problems can cease. Faith conquers all.

At the same time, wounded pride or lost self-respect are found again in identifying oneself with the greatness of the leader. Events in Italy and Germany since the war have shown that unless a political system can provide its body of citizens with a real sense of self-respect, it cannot long survive. Wounded national pride makes very inflammable political tinder. The party system of Weimar became popularly associated with national humiliation and defeat. The desire for self-respect became inflamed self-pride, often mingled with self-pity. And only the aggressiveness of the Nazi Party could meet the situation. It combined individual submission with collective self-assertion. The German was ready to sacrifice internal personal freedom for external national independence.

It is easy to pile up overwhelming arguments against this system of politics which so completely sacrifices all individual judgment and freedom to the decision and discretion of one man—or at most to a small group of men who can enforce their decision. But it is more useful to try to discover how this system grew up, and why it has so far enjoyed considerable success. It has, I think, succeeded chiefly because it has grasped two great opportunities which the more democratic systems of government have been very loath to adopt. (Whether they have been right to refuse to adopt them will be considered in due course.)

First, the Fascist and Communist Parties have realized and utilized the immense forces offered by modern science for creating and moulding public opinion into one particular shape. The printed word, either as newspaper or book or pamphlet; the spoken word, made

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audible to millions at once by the cinema, gramophone, and wireless—and to thousands at once, even in one meeting, by electrical amplification ; the visible scene and the story with a moral, which can be conveyed to the masses by the poster, the cinema, and no doubt, before long, by television as well. These scientific inventions, together with the invention of the machine-gun and the aeroplane, have made it possible for a government to secure both mental and physical conformity to its own desires. The complete success of these methods, however, depends upon several other factors, which are not quite so calculable ; upon perfection of organization, for example, which shall guarantee complete government monopoly of these inventions ; upon the skill with which propaganda can be presented without defeating itself ; and upon the extent to which men and women are likely to be satisfied by hearing only one side of every question. Foreign broadcasts, opposition wireless stations, smuggled literature, secret meetings, have all, so far, made some leakage in the system. There is not yet enough certainty of discovery and punishment to deter many brave men from taking such risks. Nor is there any evidence that the most extreme kinds of propaganda are taken very seriously by most of the people. It does not always “ get across,” and exclusion of too much news is apt to make people restive. Hitler has again been proved right, when he said that the big lie gets across better than the small lies. And perhaps it is enough for his purpose if only the big lie gets across.

Secondly, the Fascist and Communist Parties have realized and utilized the truth, emphasized by modern psychology, that the behaviour of men and women is conditioned by convention, implicit and unconscious

assumption, and customary associations of ideas. Only in certain marginal matters, and with people specially trained to analyse their beliefs psychologically and to think logically and objectively, does reason determine conduct. The connection between social behaviour and intellectual belief has been—and still is—greatly exaggerated. To try to struggle against the customs and conventions of our social environment would dissipate a great part of our energies in a futile way ; for few customs are undesirable enough to be worth our while spending a lifetime in trying to destroy them. Lord Raglan has put the point in an amusing way :

“ If, instead of saying that thieves will go to prison or liars will go to Hell we could make people think that stealing is as bad as going to a funeral in a coloured tie, or lying as bad as frying a sausage on the parlour fire, we should achieve a colossal reformation.” ¹

Indeed, by teaching children so many social conventions as if they had rational or even moral values, may we not be violating moral values themselves ?

And so, whilst the political parties of democratic States are concerned with influencing the rational opinions of citizens—which at best will only slightly affect their conduct—the Fascist and Communist Parties have concerned themselves with moulding the political assumptions and unconscious impulses of their citizens : which do, in fact, largely determine their social conduct. Democrats may call this appeal more “ primitive ” than their own. But just because it is more primitive, it is

¹ “ Freedom and Control,” in *Educating for Democracy*, ed. Cohen and Travers, 1939.

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stronger and more direct, and the Fascist and Communist can point out that they, too, are seeking to express the personality of the ordinary citizen in politics—and that they manage to do so more completely than the parties of democracy. How many citizens in a democratic State vote according to a rational and judicious weighing of the arguments put forward by each party ? Do they not vote more in accordance with their prejudices and traditional loyalties—which are based upon these very customs and unconscious assumptions to which the Fascists appeal ? Is not the only real difference between them, that the Fascists appeal more openly and more effectively to precisely the *same* side of human personality as the democrats ?

The appearance of free choice and rational judgment between alternatives, say the Fascists, is simply a delusion of democrats. The Press in Democracy may not be controlled efficiently by the Government, which is supposed to represent the will of the people, but it *is* controlled—and used much more perniciously—by irresponsible private individuals, and by the commercial interests from whose advertisements the papers derive most of their income. That British Press censorship can be extraordinarily efficient, when need be, is shown by the public ignorance of Mrs. Simpson—until it suited our authorities to disclose the problem posed by the wishes of the king. The independence of the B.B.C. is a precarious thing. It is at the disposal of any government which wishes to destroy it at short notice, or of any rebel military force strong enough to capture the broadcasting stations, as did the rebels in Vienna in 1934. And it can be argued that irrational party loyalty of voters has its counterpart in the equally conventional acquiescence

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of Members of Parliament in the demands of the party machine.

The Democrat can retort that there is, nevertheless, a large floating vote in the country, and even a large independent vote in Parliament, and that government majorities do in fact vary, and may disappear if the Government too flagrantly ignores public opinion. He can reply that this floating vote is, for the most part, influenced by the mass of popular discussion which goes on in the country. And that the variety of opinions freely expressed in the Press, national and local, does produce continuous controversy which is the very stuff of political life. Competition—even between wealthy Press lords—plays a useful part in supplying the public with news ; for the fear of being “scooped” by a rival paper prevents the complete smothering of important information.

The problem for the democrat does not, unfortunately, end there. For he must in honesty admit that only a small portion of the electorate is sufficiently well-informed to judge politics on grounds of pure reason. He must admit that the “party-game” is something of a game, involving certain pretences and polite fictions which are not strictly rational. But his real problem is, ought he to try to remedy this by making politics more purely a thing of reason and sane calculation ? Or ought he rather to learn the lesson from psychology which the Fascists have learned so well ?

Modern psychology, until very recent years, has tended to consider the individual personality in isolation—abstracted from its normal social environment. This has produced very valuable results ; but psycho-analysis can be completed only when the individual is then con-

sidered also as a member of a community—or rather of a complex series of communities. This is the tendency of recent psychological study. The gangs of Chicago, for example, have been studied as examples of group-behaviour. It is often apparently impossible to change a young man who is a member of such a gang by individual consideration. But by taking him as a member of the gang, and by trying to give the whole gang a new kind of activity which is socially useful, then individual members can be considerably changed. There is a famous old Russian propaganda film, called *The Road to Life*. It describes how the gangs of street urchins which infested post-revolutionary Russian cities could be enlisted in constructive work by using the leaders, who had emerged as the natural leaders of the gangs, to organize their gangs for different purposes. The gangs were, in fact, taken over as going concerns, and used *as a whole* for constructional work. They were trained to new crafts in colonies such as Bolshevo. Each individual was thus given a new interest in life, whilst his self-respect was left unimpaired by taking care not to isolate him from the one community he was already conscious of. His personality was readjusted to a new kind of life and a new society, by continuing his existing community life.

A child behaves very differently when he is in his family, in his class at school, in the playground, or in a gang. Different kinds of institution react very differently upon the behaviour and self-expression of the individual personality. Schoolboy societies produce quite recognizable features—elaborate conventions, codes of conduct, taboos, the growth of cliques and little gangs, a tendency to exaggerate any traditional peculiarities which may have

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grown up, such as a particular form of slang—even a particular “school vocabulary.” The forces of mass-suggestion and imitation are very clearly seen at work. There are cycles of fashion—at one time of the year spinning-tops, at another marbles, at another the collection of stamps or cigarette cards. The public schools cultivate this spirit in the form of Houses, team games, and general school patriotism. Even in secondary schools, where there is no residence and therefore hardly any House spirit, the Form may become a very self-conscious community. My own Form at school was intensely “patriotic” from the first, and by the end of our first term at school we had started a Form magazine which had not existed before, and remained remarkably self-consciously distinct from our exact contemporaries in other Forms.

This sense of belonging together, of being a natural part of an active community, seems to be an essential element in the development of human personality. It satisfies a real need of human nature. And there is little doubt that the democratic tendency is to underrate the strength and the value of this group-feeling. Democratic thinkers consider the individual apart from his social environment as an essentially rational being, who is capable of guiding his conduct in accordance with certain logical conclusions. They tend to neglect those emotional adjustments between the individual and society which make the difference between happiness and unhappiness.

The small communities have tended to fall apart in modern times. Movement of population and the growth of big towns have uprooted many people from their original neighbourhood without providing them with a

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new community life. The decline of church-going has weakened the bonds of religious community life. The more impersonal societies of the factory, the office, and the school have grown up. In these, because membership is not entirely voluntary, community life has not the same intensity nor the same variety. The family remains the one intimately personal community to which the individual normally belongs. And even that, with the advent of the motor-car and the diverse attractions of outside diversion, is no longer the intense community it was in Victorian days. The "family entertainment"—apart from the large, riotous, and more impersonal "parties" on special occasions—is now a rarer thing. Entertainment is mass-produced and mass-absorbed. The cinema, the sports field, the dog track, are mass-spectacles, in which there is not so much an "audience," a "meeting," or a "congregation," as simply a "crowd" of "spectators," inertly receptive of the entertainment specially catered for them.

This affects the level of our art and culture. The producer of a stage play knows that it will attract to his theatre only a particular kind of audience in a particular locality. He therefore knows that he must satisfy a particular level of taste. He knows that there will be many kinds of people who will never dream of passing through his box-office anyhow, so he is not concerned with their varied tastes. But the producer of the film has no such guide. He must try to give entertainment for a much vaster, and therefore a much more anonymous public. Far from being limited to one level of taste or one locality, he must try to please thousands of people with no taste at all (are not their ninepences as valuable as any one else's ?), who may be scattered

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over the five continents of the world. In these conditions, most of the films shown in our cinemas must be based upon considerations of mere spectacle, song and dance, and sex-appeal, rather than upon dramatic quality or artistic subtlety. The entertainment business has become one of the heavy industries of the world.

Broadcasting is liable, for the same reasons, to fall into the same ways. So far, however, the B.B.C. has nobly resisted the tendency to anonymity by trying not to cater for all the people all the time, but to cater for each level of taste in turn, in the knowledge that listeners to whom a particular programme does not appeal will either switch off altogether, or tune in to an alternative programme. Indeed, listening to the wireless (and to the gramophone) is the one great influence which helps to attract the family to the home, as against the attractions of the outside mass-entertainment. The standard of taste set for B.B.C. entertainment is, therefore, that it must be such as the family can listen to in its home. The whole situation would have been very different if the wireless set had remained so expensive that it were not possible to have one in almost every home, and communal "listening clubs" had become necessary. Invention is indeed the mother of necessity.

Nowhere, perhaps, is the family more entirely the social unit than in suburbia. Every village is to some extent a community. The fact of neighbourhood—and therefore the habit of neighbourliness—are very important. But in suburbia it is possible to live for ten years in one of a row of small houses and never even to speak to the people three doors away. Nobody thinks it odd. Mere neighbourhood does not matter at all. Whether A.R.P. will alter this outlook remains to be seen. In the

slums, it is the street which is the social unit.¹ The street is a real community, governed by the rule of either neighbourliness or feud. Feelings are at least intense. A new-comer to the street, or a stranger to it, is regarded with suspicion ; a copper's nark, most likely. It is in the street that the children have played, grown up, and begun courting ; that the wives have gossiped, and the men argued or fought ; that the evidences of birth, marriage, or death have been watched with intense interest by all the inhabitants. The life of London is extremely localized. Soho, Lambeth, the Docks ; each is a separate community in itself. In the North, too, poverty breeds community. There is no such thing as a "distressed area" : only distressed "communities." "Residential area" and "built-up area," on the other hand, are very apt descriptions of the places where so many of us live. We are a long way yet from the suburban patriotism which Mr. G. K. Chesterton imagined in *The Napoleon of Notting Hill*.

But perhaps one more encouraging feature of our modern democratic society which should not go unnoticed is the great revival of club life—particularly in the form of sports clubs. Schools more and more retain the loyalty of old pupils, and even parents, by organizing sports clubs, socials, dramatic societies and lectures. Churches contrive to attract many of their younger members by similar methods. Institutions like Holiday Camps, Youth Hostels Associations, and the rest, appeal directly to the community spirit. And—most important of all from the political standpoint—are movements like

¹ Certain observers have found that shorter streets are apt to produce more actual voters at elections than do long streets. How far such conclusions are to be taken seriously is, however, doubtful in the present immature and optimistic stage of mass-observation.

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the Workers' Educational Association, University Extension Lectures, and Village Community Centres, in which Cambridgeshire has set the example. Every kind of community stimulates interest in one's fellow-citizens and widens personal awareness of public affairs. The richest democratic society is that which has the greatest possible diversity of community life. But most important politically are those communities which are directly concerned with the understanding of modern problems, and which organize free discussion of these problems. It is they which complete the process begun and stimulated by all community life—the process of creating an alert, well-informed public opinion upon the problems of government.

This is the first great way in which the nature and texture of society determine the character of the State which embodies it. Politics are conditioned, ultimately, by public opinion. And public opinion is conditioned by the community life of the men and women who live in that society. But there is another way, too, in which the nature of politics is affected by community life.

In every communal activity which is not dominated by outside authority, certain "natural leaders" usually emerge. In a sports club, it is those who show a particular aptitude for the game and a readiness to organize the club's activities who are accepted as captains. On the whole, it is those most interested and most competent in the matters of common interest who are accorded leadership. In a gang, it is the fellow most ready to suggest exploits, and most daring in carrying them out who establishes an ascendancy over the others. In organizations of men concerned chiefly with acquiring money, it is the man who makes a fortune who is hailed

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as the hero. It is success in a particular activity which gives a man natural authority in the affairs of that activity. By their heroes shall ye know them, and by their heroes shall they be judged.

In general, then, the leaders who emerge in a democratic society will largely reflect the chief concern and activity of that society. The more internal communities there are which are concerned with intelligent understanding of political problems, the greater will be the authority accorded to those who are most expert in these matters. A constituency where a large number of voters has studied and discussed the problems of unemployment will be more likely to recognize, respect, and vote for a candidate who is himself interested in and understands unemployment problems. A process of selection and discrimination will go on all over the country, according to the extent to which particular political problems have been thought about and discussed. Pressure will be brought to bear upon local party associations to find and propose candidates who shall conform to the requirements of the constituency. Competition between rival parties is an infallible weapon in the hands of voters who really know what they want. The sensitiveness of the party system varies in direct proportion to the clear-headedness of the electorate.

This means that it is very easy for democracy to fall into a vicious circle. Public apathy means that uninspiring leaders emerge—merely self-seeking politicians who have not been accepted as natural leaders or as special authorities on anything except their own ambitions. This kind of government induces still more public apathy. And so on. Sudden crisis may shake the voters out of their indifference—and then it may be too late.

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But the only systematic way of avoiding the vicious circle is by voluntary action to encourage and invigorate every kind of community life which tends to make the individual more actively interested in social affairs ; and every means of education which may make him better informed on the complexities of these affairs. The ever-increasing activity in Adult Education and Discussion Groups is one of the most encouraging signs in our modern democracies.

The group spirit, by simultaneously satisfying both the self-giving and the self-assertive impulses in men, and so stimulating both service and self-respect at the same time, ensures that these two impulses are not in perpetual conflict, as they would be in its absence. It enables them to reinforce one another, and to find harmonious expression in co-operative action instead of merely cancelling each other out. Only through discipline and leadership does the self-assertive side of personality become valuable in politics. That there should be discipline and leadership is inevitable. But the nature of the discipline and the direction of the leadership are determined mainly by the texture of community life. If the community is religious, and that religion is narrow and fanatical, then the discipline will be narrow and the leadership fanatical. If the community is free and democratic, then the discipline will be free and the leadership tolerant. So in this sense again it is true that every nation gets the government it deserves.

To the politically minded German, politics are a matter of philosophy and high seriousness ; to the American, they are a business ; to the Englishman, they are usually something of a game. There is an inherent

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love of taking sides—which may have something to do with our preference for a two-party system. There can only be two sides to a game. The attitude towards leadership reflects these characteristic differences of outlook. To the German, the “Leader” is the captain of his soul. To the American, he is a captain of industry or a party boss. To the Englishman, the party leader is the captain of his side. He is entitled to popular support after an electoral victory, on the principle that “the best man won.” Such phrases as “the rules of the game” and “it’s only fair” spring readily to the lips of the Englishman when he discusses party politics. The British Cabinet depends upon skilful team work under a generally accepted captain. Any one who has ever listened to political discussions amongst North-countrymen in a railway carriage or a pub will appreciate how instinctively the sporting attitude and vocabulary overflow into popular political judgments.

Other nations may be proud of their “Corporative States,” though they are not always what they seem. But the Englishman is a natural syndicalist. He is content to assume that the man who emerges as the leader from amongst those best qualified to judge in that particular line is the best man for him. That is how his judges and his leading doctors and clergy are appointed—or so he supposes. That, too, is how his Prime Minister is chosen. He is the man whom the professional politicians of his party have agreed to accept as their leader ; and presumably they know.

This is, in many ways, a shrewd instinct ; though other more sinister forces may often, in fact, influence the selection. But it is usually true that the natural leader is on the side of order. The gang-leader is the

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great conservative. He stands in the conventional ways, and he it is who suppresses any tendency to break the accepted rules of conduct, who enforces conformity to the gang code, and therefore promotes order within his community. To some extent, he is leader precisely because he embodies the common tendencies in their most complete and comprehensive form ; so his orthodoxy will be accepted and supported against all who would disobey. "O.K. Chief" is the anarchist's submission to government. Like every man responsible for organizing anything, even the gangster is ultimately on the side of order—at least in his own community. Every successful revolutionary soon becomes a conservative ; and that is why so many revolutions end in tyranny.

Every force which expresses public opinion also helps to make it. And this is true of the natural leader, the "Representative Man." There is a continual process of interaction. The leader emerges because he is the "Representative Man" of a powerful section of the community. He therefore acquires the power to mould public opinion still further into his own pattern of ideas. And this may be as true of the Prime Minister of a democracy as of the great dictators. This is what Mr. H. R. G. Greaves has said about the British Prime Minister :

"Having once been chosen, the Prime Minister ceases in gradually increasing measure to be the mere creature of his creators. As leader of the party in the country, and still more as the chief member of the Government and the greatest dispenser of patronage in public life, he takes on a new stature. Power makes him interesting. His personality is "put across" to the public by the Press, the newsreel, the radio, the cartoonist. His features and voice and peculiarities are made familiar to every one in the country. He attains a public

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personality which, often enough, his friends would find a great difficulty in recognizing as his own. He is converted into something of a symbol and a figurehead. Around him centres a certain amount of hero-worship. Criticism by his own followers is regarded as disloyalty. He has grown not only into a leader but into the chief buttress of party unity, and in time of emergency of national unity. This public personality is one of the chief assets of his party at a general election. The more the ordinary citizen can be taught to love its peculiarities, to believe in its honesty, or to admire its courage and intelligence, the more likely is he to vote for the candidate who is its follower. Around the base of the pedestal upon which it poses there may be rivalry, but the statue is so valuable to the party and can so seldom be removed except at the cost of disunity, that the man himself has greatly enhanced prestige, influence, and power.”¹

There are few clearer examples of the interaction of the man and the office, the personal and the impersonal in politics than that curious modern phenomenon the “public personality,” which is half-natural and half-synthetic.

It must be said once again that in politics fictions are as important as facts. Indeed, a fiction *becomes* a fact in politics—so long as it is a successful fiction. Political situations are created by beliefs and opinions, and it is often of little importance whether those beliefs are accurate or erroneous. That is why government is an art, and there is little sign of its ever becoming a science. The imponderable human element is too great.

Yet the art of government, like every other art, has a technique of its own, which is determined by the nature of the material with which it has to work. And it may well be that neither intellectually nor emotionally can the personality of the ordinary citizen be adequately

¹ H. R. G. Greaves, *The British Constitution*, pp. 115–16. This is an admirable survey of modern British politics and their tendencies.

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and permanently represented in politics by only one man or only one party. A sense of tension and frustration is liable to accumulate in these conditions. There is a phenomenon of prison life known as "smashing-up." When the prisoner's sense of frustration reaches its last stages, and tension snaps, a convict will blindly smash everything in his cell. The frustration generated by a political system is apt to find outlet, too, in a general "smashing-up." And it may be that a party system is less likely to generate frustration than a single-party State. But there is no room for democratic complacency in this respect. If for any reason whatever there is a general sense of popular frustration or a loss of national self-respect, any political system is liable to be smashed up ; as can be amply shown from the experience of post-war Europe. And then the milder "party games" soon give place to the game of "follow-my-leader" ; and even to Jew-baiting, Hunt-the-Heretic, Blonde-Man's-Bluff, and similar totalitarian diversions.

CHAPTER VIII

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

“And they don’t bother about the future, either—the future when perhaps the people will move in again—for a time—as may very well be. The Wild Wood is pretty well populated by now ; with all the usual lot, good, bad, and indifferent—I name no names. It takes all sorts to make a world. But I fancy you know something about them yourself by this time.” “I do indeed,” said the Mole, with a slight shiver.

THERE seems to be a natural tendency for the foreign policy of a political party to be, on the whole, a projection of its home policy. The same blend of principle and interest is apt to find external expression, as well as internal. In this way the Whigs of the English Revolution tended naturally to oppose Catholic Spain and the France of Louis XIV., with which the Stuart kings had found a natural sympathy. Whig support for Holland and the other side of the “balance of power” found final expression when William of Orange himself became King of England. The Tories who made the Peace of Utrecht were equally concerned with getting a “balance of power” in Europe, but sought it by a timely arrangement with France, rather than by prolonged war.

In our own day it is the socialist parties who want a definite alliance with Russia and assistance to the Government in Spain, and the Conservatives who prefer appeasement of the Anti-Comintern States. Indeed, the most

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striking development in modern international affairs is the rise of great political parties which have international connections and associations. Home affairs and foreign affairs are becoming more and more closely intertwined. This is partly due to international trade—political understandings are necessary with a regular customer, the protection of trade-routes influences policy. But above all it is due to the rise of “ideological” political parties.

Until modern times, religious principle was the only call strong enough and far-reaching enough to carry from nation to nation. The Roman Church, whilst acquiring a certain tone of local difference in each country, has retained its power of making a transcendent appeal across national frontiers. The Huguenots of sixteenth-century France justified the help they received from outside France, in their treatise *Vindiciae contra Tyrannos*. But in other matters internal interference from abroad in the internal affairs of a nation was resented.

But now it is more than likely in this economically interdependent and socially interlocked world that the same sort of political issues, the same forces of principle and interest, will arise all over the place in different States. The communists were the first to realize and exploit this fact. Their doctrine of the universal class-war cut across all national frontiers, and the cry of the Communist Manifesto of 1848 was “Workers of all Countries, Unite.” The Communist International is a political party which tries to work within each State in a more or less co-ordinated plan. Its activities have helped to produce the so-called “Fascist International,” or Anti-Comintern Pact of Germany, Italy, and Japan. Its activities, too, are international—though often with a very specifically national purpose. Thus, Nazi “cells”

are set up in most democratic countries, with the purpose of penetration, propaganda, agitation, or simply spying. It seems that one good Comintern deserves another. Less revolutionary creeds also cultivate international associations and have extra-national sympathies. Bodies such as the League of Nations Union and the various peace societies naturally work on an international scale. The Oxford Group Movement prides itself on its international activities.

We have to ask ourselves, then, what is the place of such parties and movements in national representative government? Such parties clearly represent the international sympathies of a large number of citizens. Can these sympathies be completely reconciled with the citizen's loyalty to his own State? These questions were raised in an acute form by the problem of foreign intervention in the Spanish War.

Logically, there seems to be an insoluble dilemma in the notion of party government in foreign affairs. If differences of foreign policy do coincide with internal party divisions—which we suggested seemed to be the natural tendency—then a lack of continuity and an element of uncertainty must be introduced into the foreign policy of any State which has a party system. A change of the party in power will also mean a change—or at least a readjustment—of foreign policy, and this fluctuation may well be disastrous in international relationships. On the other hand, if differences of foreign policy do not coincide with internal party divisions, how is the personality of the ordinary citizen to find any expression at all in foreign policy? Foreign affairs in these critical times becomes an ever more vital interest of the ordinary citizen; they are literally a matter of life and death for

him. Must they be regarded as a section of political activity in which he can, in the nature of things, have no direct say ?

In order to escape from the first horn of this dilemma it can be argued, with good reason, that it is precisely those States which have a party system that have shown the most consistent foreign policies in modern times. The party system works by a process of dialectic—a constant process of argument, discussion, give and take—and there is, therefore, no sudden change of policy when a new party comes into power. The foreign policy of each party is, in fact, modified and adjusted to meet the criticisms and demands of the other, before it is actually applied. And there are other considerations, too, which help to explain the remarkably consistent foreign policies of the modern democracies. Foreign policies are not determined so much by “ideology” or party creed as by permanent, more impersonal factors, such as geographical position, the “facts of the case,” the uncontrollable circumstances of the moment, the power and the policies of other States. No other kind of political activity is so completely controlled by external factors, and so little a matter of personal inclination or national will. Previous promises, commitments and treaties, and the force of tradition, all play a larger part in deciding it than does the mere temporary desire of the electorate. In the nature of things, it may be said, the electorate cannot know or understand all these things. Foreign affairs, above all, require expert knowledge, judgment, and guidance. The intrusion of public opinion into these matters cannot be of any value. The opinion of the ordinary man is, in most cases, just irrelevant.

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The remarkable consistency of democratic foreign policies must be admitted. America—largely by reason of her geography—has always been isolationist in policy from the time when she severed her connection with Britain until just the other day. The temporary intrusion of President Wilson into European politics was resented in America, and was quickly nullified by refusal to join the League of Nations which Wilson himself had founded. The Monroe Doctrine is mainly an expression of a desire to be left alone. When this attitude eventually changes, it will probably be due to a change in technical conditions—as, for example, such an increase in the range of the bombing aeroplane as would bring New York within bombing range of Europe—much more than to political propaganda. The formation of Nazi “cells” in America may prove to be a similar influence.

French foreign policy, whatever the parties in power, has been dominated by fear of Germany and the desire for territorial security. Again, geography and national tradition are the strongest influences. German policy has been influenced by geography in a somewhat different way. Germany has lacked any sharp geographical, historical, or racial outline. Her people have been conscious of the absence of any very definite centre of gravity, and her policy, with its nationalistic aggressiveness, hides an underlying nervous uncertainty. They have come to value political unity above all other kinds of unity. The State is the supreme community. It was made by “blood and iron,” and it must become identified with community of “blood and soil.” German diplomacy has come to rely upon force, or the threat of force, as its main instrument of negotiation. Diplomacy is simply another means of waging war. As Mr. Harold

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Nicolson puts it : " It seems to them more important to inspire fear than to beget confidence." ¹ But if Germany bases diplomacy on power, Italy tries to base power on diplomacy. It has been suggested that the key to Italian foreign policy is that Italy combines the ambitions of a Great Power with the methods of a Small Power. Her diplomacy is based upon incessant manœuvre ; and her only conception of the " balance of power " is a delicate balance, in which Italy is able to tip the scale and gain the decisive voice. And so her aim and her method remain the same, though her particular tactics at any one time may be uncertain and intricately subtle.

Clearly, where permanent necessities and strong traditions of this kind hold sway, the temporary desires of the body of citizens play only a minor rôle. It is not even true that they can determine the ultimate decision of war or peace, in the same way that they can determine matters of internal national policy. For whilst it takes two to negotiate an agreement, one can make a war. It is this fear of having an unwanted war forced upon them which haunts so many people in Europe to-day.

It can be said with equal force that the foreign policy of Great Britain has also been conditioned more by geographical and strategic considerations, than by the wishes of any party or the personalities of any statesmen. Her insulated position, before the coming of the aeroplane, meant that she was a part of Europe, but apart from it. It was as important that she was off the continent as that she was of it. Her traditional policy, from the time of the Tudors onwards, has been guided by two great principles : the " balance of power " in Europe

¹ *Diplomacy*, p. 147. I owe many of the ideas in this chapter to Mr. Nicolson's excellent little book.

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must be preserved, in the sense that Europe must not be dominated by any one Power ; and England is intensely interested in the independence and the friendliness of the Low Countries. Her conception of the need for a "balance of power" was the opposite to Italy's, because whereas Britain's interest lay only in preventing an extreme unbalance, Italy's aim depended upon creating a balance as nearly perfect as possible between all powers except Italy. Her aim was to ensure being on the stronger side, ours was to take sides against the stronger side. Her diplomacy was to be as active and ubiquitous as possible ; ours was to be as isolationist as possible, until a menace to the balance could no longer be ignored. Our policy has been changed in recent times far more by the advent of the aeroplane and by considerations of Imperial strategy, than by any party principles or national "ideology." If any one doubts that, in general, national strategy matters more than national "ideology" in determining foreign policy, he has only to consider the change in Russian foreign policy in recent years.

A further difficulty is that in no other sphere is the ordinary citizen so likely to be ill-informed or so moved by blind prejudice as he is in foreign affairs. It used to be hoped that increased travel facilities would produce more sensible understanding of foreign nations. Few would be so hopeful now. As Mr. Nicolson amusingly expresses it :

"More dangerous even than popular ignorance are certain forms of popular knowledge. . . . A summer cruise in Dalmatia, a bicycling tour in the Black Forest, three happy weeks at Porto Fino, and he returns with certain profound convictions regarding the Near East, the relations between Herr Hitler and his General Staff, and the effect of the Abyssinian venture upon Italian public opinion. Since his judgment is based upon feelings rather than upon thoughts, he is

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at the mercy of any chance encounter or any accidental circumstance. The fact that some impatient policeman may have pushed or prodded Effie that day at Schaffhausen may well render Effie's parents "anti-German" for life." ¹

We have all heard the "impressions" of a country after a fortnight's tour; and noted popular regard for the casual taxi-driver as an oracle of public opinion. There may have been much wisdom in the efforts of the English monarchs to retain for the Crown and its advisers a special monopoly of foreign policy. The expert observer may often be wrong; but he is less likely to be wrong than that man that Auntie talked to in the train.

Are we, then, driven on to the second horn of the dilemma? If party differences matter little in foreign policy, and if our political relations with other States and peoples are governed chiefly by considerations of military strategy and necessity, and if foreign policy anyhow is a matter beyond our ken, must we reconcile ourselves to a completely passive part in external politics? Has individual personality no place in international politics? Must they be left entirely to the experts to decide, upon a careful consideration of all the available facts of the case? And if they pursue a policy which eventually leads us into war, then must we resign ourselves to war as the inevitable outcome of the only policy which we were in a position, as a nation, to pursue?

Now the arguments leading up to this kind of conclusion have very much more force than many people will readily allow. Is it not in a sense true, for example, that democratic States suffer under an immense handicap in dealing with dictatorships? May not their party systems be a great nuisance in relation to foreign policy?

¹ *Diplomacy*, p. 94.

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Take our relationships with Italy. It is possible that either of our policies, *if consistently followed*, would have been successful. Had our sanctionist policy, of supporting collective action against Italy for her breach of the Covenant in attacking Abyssinia, been logically and completely followed out, it would probably have succeeded. Had the half-hearted economic sanctions been backed up, if need be, by active military and naval sanctions, the principle of collective security might have been vindicated. Alternatively, had we from the first officially condoned her action, sympathized with her desire for colonies, and adopted Mr. Chamberlain's policy of appeasement, we should have retained her friendship, and certainly Abyssinia would have been none the worse off. Indeed, had the Hoare-Laval plans been accepted, Abyssinia would now be better off. But our dither between two opposite policies has simply lost us the friendship of Italy without enabling us to do anything to help Abyssinia. Either policy alone might have been effective ; but both alternately have been fatal. And similar arguments can be applied to our relations with Germany since the Great War. Our relations with our American colonies fluctuated in a similar way, with the result that they broke away and declared their independence. When a consistent policy of generosity has been applied—as it has been applied to the Dominions—it has invariably succeeded.

This last fact is, of course, the flaw in the argument that inconsistent external policy is inherent in a State governed by a party system. Our foreign policy since the war has been unsatisfactory not *because* we are governed by a party system, but because the ingredient items of an adequate defence policy have not been related

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to one another. Each party has advocated one item, as if the ingredients were mutually exclusive instead of supplementary to one another. Foreign policy and national defence have been thought of as two separate things. They are two sides of the same thing.

National defence involves four kinds of activity, and not simply two, as our parties are content to assume. It involves an "adequate" equipment of armaments—military, naval, and air. (What "adequate" means depends upon the other three factors.) It also involves *either* a system of collective security, whereby as many States as possible are persuaded to give mutual guarantees of support against aggression, *or* a system of alliances. Collective security without "adequate" armament is impossible, just as armaments without some sort of alliance is futile. The enemy will clearly make allies, and no war would be fought in Western Europe without allies. And the stronger and more unconditional the system of alliance, the less is the likelihood of attack. That is the plain, if somewhat despondent, logic of Power politics. To get specific guarantees, you have to give them. You cannot keep a "free hand," because a "free hand" is also an empty hand, and no one can go empty-handed in time of war; nor is there any use in brandishing arms in one hand if the other hand is empty. Thirdly, national defence involves efficient Air Raid Precautions, because in modern warfare the "home front" would be of primary importance. Finally, it involves a system of national (and in the case of France and ourselves, imperial) strategy. There are certain strategic points—Gibraltar, Suez, Malta—which we must be able to use in time of war, if our people are to be fed. To preserve other methods of defence and to neglect these is fatal.

Friendly alliance—armaments—A.R.P.—strategy: only taken together do these items of policy make sense. Only when related to one another can it be decided what an “adequate” equipment of armaments really is. Yet no one party has troubled to integrate these various items of our national defence. At times we have even seen one party advocating “collective security” without armaments, whilst the other agreed to “collective security” provided that it did not involve too much “foreign commitment.” At another time one advocated rearmament without collective security and without foreign alliances or Imperial strategy, whilst the other momentarily seemed to favour moderate rearmament but not A.R.P. One section of one party even wants no system of national defence whatever.

This inadequacy in the programmes of all our political parties has left the electorate without guidance and the issues without clarification. The reason for the inconsistencies of our foreign policy in recent years is not the activity of our parties, but their inactivity. We have not seen things steadily, and seen them whole. The remedy for this situation is not the abeyance or the short-circuiting of party activities, but the invigoration and improvement of political parties.

The considerations already suggested (in Chapter V. above) apply with equal force to the rôle which party plays in deciding foreign policy. Foreign affairs are essentially a matter of personal confidence. A “doctor’s mandate” may be more necessary here than in domestic affairs. Wider powers of discretion may have to be allowed to the man who is politically responsible for conducting foreign policy. The “man-on-the-spot” naturally has greater responsibility and freedom of

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judgment in moments of emergency, and many foreign affairs are matters of emergency. He has to inspire confidence that he is, in fact, a responsible spokesman of the "general national will," in the sense that any agreement he makes is practically certain to be endorsed by the government of his State.

But these requirements are only another plea that the electorate must, in considering foreign policy, think as much of men as of measures. The parties must concentrate upon finding and promoting suitable representatives who shall fill this need. Each party must try to present the issues of national defence as a whole, and refrain from making political capital out of the unpleasantness of certain measures which may have to be taken by the government in ensuring defence. At the same time it is the duty of an opposition party to make as much capital as possible out of the serious omissions of any government which is slow to face the facts of the international situation. For only by constant criticism can any policy become precisely adjusted to the needs and the mood of the moment.

It is sometimes suggested, in this connection, that such opposition and such open discussion of defence measures places democratic States at a serious disadvantage when they are competing with strictly controlled dictatorships. It means, of course, that the weaknesses of democracies are openly discussed and made known to the world, and no doubt often exaggerated. It means that dictatorships can put up a brave show of immense efficiency, exaggerating their preparedness and ridiculing the weaknesses of their rivals. But is not this very discussion of weaknesses a source of strength? Does it not lead to their gradual elimination? And is it not

rather a sign of nervous anxiety rather than of political strength to suppress all criticism of policy? It is true that for a time the dictatorships may even make great headway against their democratic neighbours. They are in the strong tactical position of being able to suppress all liberal opinions at home on Fascist or Communist principles, whilst claiming toleration for their own propagandists abroad on liberal principles. The Nazi penetration of Denmark, Czecho-Slovakia, and other nearby democracies without any danger of retaliation, shows the strength of this position. But it may be that they can only make headway until the democracies learn the proper technique for preventing it. Democracies have generally been slow to take any repressive action against their factious intolerant minorities. They are now realizing that it is not at all inconsistent for a free government to stop the provocative actions of any minority which proclaims that it is prepared to overthrow the State by force if its means of persuasion fail. No State can afford to tolerate a private party army.

There is one consideration which sometimes tends to paralyse the action of a democracy in dealing with a dictator. It is the notion that the dictator is in a difficult position, and must always be conscious of the need to keep up his prestige at home. He must not, therefore, be pressed into any diplomatic situation from which he could not extricate himself easily and without "loss of face." It is felt that he would then be impelled to declare war simply because he could not climb down. This might conceivably apply to a dictator who was already tottering from power, and who felt that a last desperate throw might save his fortunes. I do not believe that it applies at all to a dictator who is so strongly entrenched

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in power, and so completely in command of the machinery of government, as are all our present European dictators. Beyond a certain amount of personal chagrin, and perhaps difficulties with his immediate cronies, I do not believe that this Chinese notion of "loss of face" greatly worries our dictators. Any concession—even a complete withdrawal of demands which have been noisily proclaimed—could with the greatest of ease be presented to his people as a noble gesture to avoid war, a great national sacrifice of just demands in a moment of danger, or simply a wise postponement of claims which would eventually be asserted by more tactful methods. Any decision of the Leader can be presented, through propaganda, as the right decision. And the dictator is actually in a position to make concessions more easily, if need be, than is a democratic leader, who has to persuade his own government and electorate that concession may be wise.

Democracies were for a long time especially anxious to free themselves from the dangers of "secret diplomacy." They were afraid of being committed by their rulers to secret promises which they should not discover until the moment of crisis. Then they would be faced with the alternatives of allowing themselves to be dragged into a war against their will, or else openly repudiating their commitment. In 1914 the terms of the agreement between France and Russia were not known to the French and Russian peoples. The first of President Wilson's "Fourteen Points" of January 1918 was that in future there should be "open covenants of peace, openly arrived at." The first of these two demands was met by Article 18 of the Covenant of the League of Nations, which stipulated that :

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“Every treaty or international engagement entered into hereafter by any Member of the League shall be forthwith registered with the Secretariat and shall as soon as possible be published by it. No such treaty or international engagement shall be binding until so registered.”

In this way the peoples of all those States which are still members of the League are neither legally nor morally bound by any secret engagement made by their governments. The second half of President Wilson's demand, that such agreements should be “openly arrived at,” cannot be met entirely. The process of diplomatic negotiation demands at least temporary secrecy and discretionary powers for the negotiators.

Here, again, is a sphere of politics where the expert must be given a comparatively free hand. Even the politician playing the rôle of the amateur diplomatist is a danger. His visits and meetings with foreign politicians are too much surrounded by publicity, and negotiation may be smothered by ceremony. The “state occasion” is not the best opportunity to reach a precise and ratifiable agreement. Differences of personality should be excluded as far as possible. The more impersonal the atmosphere of the negotiations, the more likely is a sensible and comprehensive agreement to be reached. The men participating should be able to think as little as possible about themselves, and as much as possible about the objective facts of the situation. Human friendliness may not always be an advantage. As Mr. Nicolson has pointed out: “The difficulties of precise negotiations arise with almost equal frequency from the more amiable qualities of the human heart. It would be interesting to analyse how many foolish decisions, how many fatal

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misunderstandings have arisen from such pleasant qualities as shyness, consideration, affability, or ordinary good manners. One of the most persistent disadvantages of all diplomacy by conference is this human difficulty of remaining disagreeable to the same set of people for many days at a stretch.”¹ The art of diplomacy is not, unfortunately, simply the art of pleasant and non-committal conversation.

The present international situation is immensely complicated by the fact that conflict is not merely between nations or between States, but between parties and States, and between parties and parties. Certain parties with international sympathies have completely captured the government machinery of certain nation States; the Communist Party has identified itself with the Russian State, the Nazi Party with the German State, and the Fascist Party with the Italian State. International relations are therefore a curious amalgam of national rivalries, party feuds, and ideological hatreds. The democracies, where particular parties have not permanently identified themselves with the government machinery, tend to become the victims of the manoeuvres of these various rivalries, and even pawns in the whole game of totalitarian politics. Both Communist and Fascist parties have adopted the tactics of intervention in other States, of internal disruption and active encouragement of revolts. Czecho-Slovakia and Spain—both of which had a genuinely democratic system of government—are the two most outstanding victims of this technique. Denmark, Switzerland, and even France, have all had great difficulty in resisting this technique. And the chief advantage of the single-party States has been the reluctance

¹ *Peacemaking*, p. 67.

of the democracies to indulge in any intervention against them. The tradition of non-intervention in the internal affairs of other nations has a long and honourable life in Britain and America. It has always been the obvious policy for liberal democracies living in a world of States with diverse constitutions. Lord Castlereagh's famous State Paper of May 5, 1820, declared that :

"The principle of one State interfering by force in the internal affairs of another in order to enforce obedience to the governing authority is always a question of the greatest possible moral, as well as political, delicacy. . . . No country having a Representative System of Government could act upon it."

When originally formulated, however, the doctrine of non-intervention actually worked positively in favour of liberal movements and institutions in Europe. The risings against "governing authority" were nearly all liberal and nationalist movements, and the greatest service Britain could do them was to refuse to co-operate with the powers of repression, and even on occasion to make it clear that she would intervene to prevent intervention. But the international position to-day is precisely the opposite. All European movements of a subversive kind work against liberal institutions, because they are promoted by these totalitarian parties ; and they are powerful, because these parties have at their disposal the immense resources—military and economic—of the nation States which they control. Should democracy, in this new situation, cling to its preference for non-intervention ? Or should it be prepared, as in the days of Castlereagh's successor Canning, to intervene to prevent intervention ?

The right to sell arms to the legitimate government of

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a State which is confronted by rebellion is, of course, quite another matter, to be determined purely by considerations of expediency on the part of the government. The *right* to do so cannot be denied. The only justification for Britain's refusing to sell arms to the Spanish Government is not that this would be intervention ; it is simply that the British Government decided that it was inadvisable—whether or not that decision was right is for later history to show. On Doctor Negrin's own statement, the governments of Italy and Germany continued to exercise that right to sell arms to the Spanish Government, even whilst they were also helping the Insurgents.

But the policy of active and gratuitous help, by the forces and equipment of a foreign government, is the essence of intervention. And it may well be that the democracies are wise in their general reluctance to indulge in this kind of intervention. It would almost certainly have an injurious effect on the internal working of their own party systems. A party in power would inevitably be drawn into close contact and sympathy with other nations and parties dominated by a similar policy at the moment. There would not be unanimity in the country, and the wide cleavages of public opinion so produced might endanger all democratic institutions. Moreover, a change of government would entail a complete change of foreign policy, and therefore constant uncertainty in international affairs. All domestic issues would be even more completely smothered by foreign affairs than they already are.

But a distinction should be made between official intervention and voluntary intervention. Whereas it might be inadvisable for the party in power to promote official intervention, it should be permissible for those

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parties not in power to organize, on a voluntary basis, any help to either side which they can evoke from the people. The ordinary citizen should be allowed to express his sympathy for fellow-believers in a foreign war in an active way—by volunteering for personal service, or by subscribing for shipment of food, clothes, and medical supplies. This right of the ordinary citizen is still recognized in most democracies. And it may be, for him, an essential way of expressing his personality in politics.

And so to the final question : Are democracies at a fatal disadvantage in dealing with dictatorships? It is fairly clear that they are not. Their greatest weakness is their slowness to adjust themselves to changed conditions, or even to realize that the situation may have changed. They too easily follow traditional policies, though these may be out-of-date. Their actions and gestures in international relationships are not always well timed. But any suggestion that their foreign policies tend to be particularly inconsistent or capricious must be denied. They are certainly not as capricious as the manoeuvres of a dictator. And their occasional fluctuations are not due to the working of the party system. It is not true that *because* we have a Left wing and a Right wing they flap alternately, and between them we allow ourselves to drift somewhat ungracefully into disaster. In fact, we have had the one party in power for the last eight years. The National Government has been in power for two years longer than Hitler. It may well be that its greatest weakness is the size of its parliamentary majority.

CHAPTER IX

CONCLUSIONS AND PROSPECTS

"Everything seems asleep, and yet going on all the time. It is a goodly life that you lead, friend; no doubt the best in the world, if only you are strong enough to lead it!"

"Yes, it's *the* life, the only life, to live," responded the Water Rat dreamily, and without his usual whole-hearted conviction.

THE diverse topics discussed in the preceding chapters of this book have all centred on one main theme—the interaction of the personal and the impersonal in modern politics. The writer believes that only by more direct discussion and a more complete understanding of this interaction can the citizen hope to find his way through the perplexities of modern politics. Nor is that interaction quite so obscure and incomprehensible as is generally supposed.

There are two general propositions which can be readily understood and agreed to.

The first of these is that social and political institutions are—like pantomime animals—animated by men, and can therefore be made to perform almost any antics which their human content want to make them perform. The machinery of government—which is a series of political devices and arrangements—is designed for certain purposes, and these are the purposes of the "politically effective" part of the community. (Pre-

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cisely what is meant by "politically effective" will be explained in a moment.) They may serve this purpose well or ill, according to the ingenuity with which they have been devised and the promptness with which they are adapted to new needs.

The other general proposition is this : that good social and political institutions are essential for men. Men and women need these impersonal means to develop and express their own personalities. All the goodwill in the world cannot find proper practical expression without appropriate institutions and political machinery. The chief problem confronting us in international affairs is the invention of the proper machinery for preventing war. Many thought we had found this in the organizations of the League of Nations. It may be that they were right, and that we shall have to rebuild the League in a slightly different form if we are to avoid war. There is abundant human desire to avoid war. But there is not yet the appropriate machinery. We are in an emergency stage of intensive rearmament. This may fail to deter aggression. We have followed a policy of appeasement. This has proved insufficient. These policies may have succeeded for long enough to allow other new forces to get to work, and these may change the whole situation. We may have to create an organization of those democracies and other States which want the rule of law to prevail in international affairs, and are prepared to surrender enough of their national sovereignty to secure this. But our urgent need is for political inventiveness. Without concrete, working organization, we must live from hand to mouth, anxiously evading each crisis as it arises, with no sense of security or stability.

Both these propositions are true, and I have tried in

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the preceding chapters to suggest some of the ways in which they are true. We are in control of our own destiny only to the extent that our social and political institutions are subtly made to serve our purposes and to embody those forces of goodwill in each community from which all progress comes.

The "politically effective" part of the community is, therefore, that section of the community which is able to use the machinery of government for its own purposes and to control the men who actually exercise the power of government. This section of the community may be determined by various factors. The Marxists insist that it is ownership of the means of production—economic power—which determines the "politically effective" class. I do not believe that this principle goes far enough. There are other forms of power besides economic power. It is not the big capitalists in Germany and Italy who are now the politically effective part of the community. Power is now entirely in the hands of the members of the Nazi Party and the leaders of that party in Germany; and their power is partly the power of brute force—partly the power of propaganda and education—partly the power of personality, the popular confidence and enthusiasm inspired by a man with a genius for agitation, leadership, and mass-suggestion.¹

The purpose of democracy is that as large a part of the community as possible should be "politically effective," in the sense of deciding who shall govern and the general lines upon which they shall govern. The institutions of democracy are therefore designed to enable the electorate and public opinion in general not only to have some say

¹ Mr. Bertrand Russell, in *Power: A New Social Analysis*, has analysed with great brilliance the various forms of power in the community.

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in the choice of persons in power, but also to exercise constant criticism of government action. Its general aim is to minimize the powers of discretion and personal opinion which are granted to its officials, whereas the aim of the dictatorships is to maximize and perpetuate these powers. When democracy is on the defensive, the discretionary powers of its governors may have to be extended. But if so, they must not be extended indiscriminately, or in the wrong directions. The ordinary citizen must be aware of what is happening, and must appreciate the implications of such changes. The moral force of personality must be institutionalized as far as possible—if only to ensure that it shall not remain purely personal and therefore temporary.

Lord Londonderry has said, "I regard the position of a dictator with feelings of apprehension, since under dictatorship the political centre of gravity is in the dictator, and not in the system of government." Dictatorship is based upon the denial of the rule of law. It is extremely difficult for any dictator to institutionalize his power. As Andrew Marvell suggested :

*" The same arts that did gain
A power must it maintain."*

The political institution which all our modern dictators have favoured is political party—a voluntary association of their loyal supporters. Every other institution of the State is subordinated to this highly disciplined party. It is a party limited in membership but unlimited in purpose. It is at the same time exclusive and all-embracing. Unlike the parties of democratic States, it is very difficult to join but very easy to leave. How far dictators

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have, by these means, managed to institutionalize the force of their personalities remains to be seen. The theory is that each member of the party is filled with the "real presence" of the leader. Through the agency of the party this "real presence" (as it is somewhat offensively called) permeates the whole community, integrating it as nothing else can. This may be roughly true for a time. But a mummified and deified Lenin had to be supplemented by the very "real presence" of a Stalin before leadership could last. Success depends on a succession.

In certain modern States it has been decided that only submission to the masterful personality of a great irresponsible leader can provide security against the menace of social disruption. The security and freedom of the ordinary citizen are in pawn—and in pawn to a broker who may not always be an honest broker. On the three balls above his door are the three magic words, Nationalism, Fascism, Racism. The pledges involved are not easily redeemable.

An impressive parable of the process by which democracy can give place to irresponsible dictatorship may be drawn from the story of the rise of great Trusts in America. These huge octopus growths emerged from an extremely democratic society, devoted to the principles of equality, free competition, and a "career open to talents." They involved the destruction of any semblance of equality and free competition. They resulted in the concentration of power and wealth in the hands of a few great leaders, and a practical monopoly of certain spheres of social activity. They meant the elimination of any organized resistance. It is worth while to look a little more closely at this process.

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The trust is based upon three factors : first, the joint-stock company, which pools a large number of small investments ; secondly, a combination of these companies, in which the affiliated companies hand over their securities and power to a board of trustees ; and finally, the predominance of a great man, whose reputation inspires confidence, and whose masterful absorption of all rival organizations is the driving force behind the amalgamation. In 1879, the first big trust of this kind was organized by John D. Rockefeller. It was the Standard Oil Trust. Commodore Vanderbilt similarly concentrated railroads in his own hands ; Andrew Carnegie, steel ; and J. P. Morgan, banking and finance—and therefore, ultimately, many of the other big trusts. The constant tendency was to bigger and bigger amalgamation, monopoly, dictatorship. The practical advantages at the time were great. Waste and overlapping were eliminated. Total production was increased. The emergencies of the Civil War and the opportunities of rapid expansion in America gave the bold bad men their chance. The adventurers, opportunists, and the most enterprising elements in the population were able to exploit the situation quite untrammelled by political interference. The great trust magnates came to have the point of view of feudal or tribal chieftains, whom indeed they in many ways resembled. They would make treaties with one another as did Carnegie and Morgan in 1900, when Carnegie's business went into Morgan's gigantic United States Steel Corporation, with a capital of well over a billion dollars. They would employ private armies of strike-breakers. They gained political power—often dominating State legislatures, and at times exerting direct pressure even on the Federal

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Government itself. Wealth and power were divided amongst separate magnates, just as they were in the feudal system. When these magnates squabbled too much amongst themselves, the strongest of them imposed the rule of law upon them, in his own interest. In 1889 J. P. Morgan formed the Interstate Railway Association of eighteen railway presidents and bankers.

"The purpose of this meeting," he told them on one occasion, "is to cause those present no longer to take the law into their own hands when they suspect they have been wronged, as has been too much the practice heretofore. This is not elsewhere customary in civilized communities, and no good reason exists why such a practice should continue among railroads." In this way must the feudal king have addressed his barons. In this way does some Fascist leader address his obstreperous party chiefs. The American trusts were a system of power politics, and had both the advantages and the immense dangers of all such systems.

To press the analogy still further, it should be noticed that the power of a man like Morgan was based upon the confidence he inspired in others. He had all the qualities of the great leader. He was credit personified. The trusts, like Fascism, were careful to retain a show of democracy. They made much of the fact that a stable-boy could become the president of a great steel company—as did Charles M. Schwab. This incited the same sort of admiration as did the log-cabin boy who became President of the United States. It was the principle of equality of opportunity for all. The small investor was in the position of the ordinary voter in a Fascist State which keeps the pretence of free election. Effort was made to let him feel that he had a voice in things, without

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allowing him any share of power. The ordinary investor—like the ordinary voter—was little more than a tool of the dictator. He had to be beguiled by spectacular achievements. And it is true that shareholders who do not control the board look all the more for dividends. The leader has to show results or perish ; though when the leader controls every channel of expressing public opinion, he is able to make quite meagre results go a very long way.

Nor are the “ results ” demanded from a Fascist leader necessarily economic benefits. They more often take the form of national glory and a new sense of self-respect which is found in the reflected glory of the leader and the movement. The dividends of Fascism may be intangible. They may be, for many, little more than a call to organized discipline and self-sacrifice. But these admirable qualities which a fanatical movement can evoke may be blended with the greed, ambitions, and sadism of large numbers of men who exploit the movement for purely selfish ends. And it may well be that the liberal democrat is right to suspect any movement which thrives on an overdraft of credulity and credit.

In the American trusts the “ politically effective ” part of the concern was constantly narrowed down until one man in effect controlled the whole machine, and vital decisions could be made by two men meeting in an office. The modern single-party States have reached the same stage—and by a very similar process. The trusts became more and more “ totalitarian,” partly because of the enterprise and ambition and credit of great leaders, but partly, too, because technical developments and economic conditions favoured the growth of monopoly and big business. Is it at all true that Fascist tendencies are also

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encouraged or even made necessary by modern technical developments? If so, then the present balance of political systems in the world is tipped against the democracies. If prevalent social and economic tendencies *are* making for a weakening of democratic systems and methods, and a strengthening of Fascist or Communist systems and methods, then democracy is fighting a losing battle.

The whole trend of modern economic organization—both of production and distribution—is towards collectivism and “trustification.” Organization gets more and more elaborate, and if we are to organize our organizations, then considerable centralization and wider powers of discretion are essential. Competition is eliminated, and gives way to either co-operation or amalgamation. The power of control becomes more and more remote from the ordinary individual who is caught up in these great tendencies. Economic systems become more collective and less individualistic; and political governments are forced to play a larger share in controlling or even conducting these economic systems. It is often argued that these tendencies are inevitable, and that democratic methods are naturally unsuitable for these new tasks of government. These new demands will strain and transform political systems until politics, too, have become remote from the ordinary citizen. They will become something beyond his understanding, and certainly beyond his control.

It may be readily agreed that these prevalent impersonal tendencies put considerable strain on democratic methods. But it is not so certain that the strain is intolerable.

Great Britain in recent years has shown considerable ingenuity in devising new democratic methods of meeting new needs. There is that curious organization known

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technically as the "semi-independent Public Corporation." The best examples are the British Broadcasting Corporation, the London Passenger Transport Board, and the Central Electricity Board. As Mr. Herbert Morrison said of the L.P.T.B. : " We are seeking a combination of public ownership, public accountability and business management for public ends." The aim of these organizations is not private profit but public service—the provision of " public utilities." They are important national public undertakings ; yet they are removed from direct and continuous political control by Parliament. They are monopolies, granted by Parliament. They are " trusts " in the popular sense of the word, in that they are not under direct political supervision. It is particularly important that organizations such as the B.B.C. should not be subject to the direct pressure and control of the political party in power at any given time. Its chiefs and their staff are encouraged to develop an ideal of public service. They are " trusted " to be independent and impartial in outlook, much as the Civil Service is trusted to be ready to serve any political party which comes into power by constitutional means. The future of these experiments depends upon the extent to which they can make themselves sensitive and responsive to public opinion, without having to be made directly accountable to Parliament. They are, in short, just such a combination of the impersonal and the personal as we have been discussing. Being in the nature of a " trust," they are subject to the influence of personality. A blatantly partial director could easily discredit the whole experiment. On the other hand, if the proper traditions of loyal public service are carefully built up by those responsible for them, an important new kind

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of institution will have been established in this country. It is noteworthy that in this respect we have resisted the tendencies, which have prevailed in most other countries, of making our broadcasting system either a monopoly of government and therefore an agency of government propaganda, or of surrendering it to private enterprise, to be paid for by the advertisers who use it as an agency for their own propaganda. We have tried to make it non-political and non-profitmaking. So far, we have succeeded remarkably well.¹

A variant of this kind of organization is the Port of London Authority, created by Act of Parliament as long ago as 1908. This organization allows for non-political yet representative control. Eighteen representatives are elected by those who use the wharfs and the river, and ten by various interested authorities such as the Admiralty, Ministry of Transport, the London County Council, the City Corporation, and Trinity House. The authority so composed enjoys great independence of decision, as well as great responsibilities.

There are distinct signs that in democracies competition is giving way to co-operation in many ways. The precise degree of independence and of political control in each case must be adjusted to the peculiarities of the case. But there can be little doubt that this is a healthy tendency in democracy. We must concentrate upon devising more and more subtle ways in which the personal and the impersonal, discretion and control, can be combined and harmonized in politics.

In this task, the politicians can learn a lot from the

¹ There is an interesting discussion of this type of organization in T. H. O'Brien's *The Semi-Independent Public Corporation*. Mr. Harold Macmillan, in *The Middle Way*, defends such bodies as illustrating the true democratic method.

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lawyers. Lawyers have always been aware that only by the skilful combination of institution and intuition could a satisfactory system of justice be attained. This is what Mr. Roscoe Pound says, in his *Introduction to the Philosophy of Law*.

“Almost all of the problems of jurisprudence come down to a fundamental one of rule and discretion, of administration of justice by law and administration of justice by the more or less trained intuition of experienced magistrates. . . . Both are necessary elements in the administration of justice, and . . . instead of eliminating either, we must partition the field between them. But it has been assumed that one or the other must govern exclusively, and there has been a continual movement in legal history back and forth between wide discretion and strict detailed rule, between justice without law, as it were, and justice according to law.”

And the place of personality in politics is closely parallel to the place of personality in the administration of justice. Let us listen to Mr. Pound again :

“The power of the magistrate has been a liberalizing agency in periods of growth. In the stage of equity and natural law, a stage of infusion of moral ideas from without into the law, the power of the magistrate to give legal force to his purely moral ideas was a chief instrument. To-day we rely largely upon administrative boards and commissions to give legal force to ideas which the law ignores. On the other hand, rule and form with no margin of application have been the main reliance in periods of stability.”¹

The greatest task for democracy to-day is to ensure that as there emerges the natural leader, the God-given hero, the “Representative Man,” his personality is constantly institutionalized. It must make certain that the personal powers of intuition, initiative, and political wisdom are absorbed and embodied in impersonal

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 111f.

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institutions, organizations, and customs. The double process must go on constantly. Institutions and customs without the invigorating force of creative personality become withered skins. And creative personality without the mantle of permanent organization is apt to burn itself out in a blaze of energy, destroying more than it creates, and doing little to illuminate our life.

Above all, we must avoid the despair that is born of disappointment. When a great human aspiration localizes itself in anything so defective and concrete as an institution or a party or a State, it goes lame and pale and brings disillusionment to the fervent believer. Politics have been compared to the wooden horse of the Greeks, which was filled with armed men. When admitted to the city of Troy by the unsuspecting Trojans, it brought about the destruction of their city :

“Each group of ambitious aspirants to power builds a wooden horse around itself, and by bribery, eloquence, flattery or fraud, persuades a sufficient number of followers to carry the thing within some coveted Troy, which it then proceeds to conquer and despoil. Some of the new rulers take the plunder, some are satisfied with power and abstract privilege alone, and the rest—the idealists who write the programmes and win the honest votes—are left wondering how it all happened. Yet the next time it is just the same. Not for nothing was Sinon, who duped the Trojans to their downfall, reputed the son of that Sisyphus condemned to perpetual stone- (or was it log- ?) rolling on Stygian hills.”¹

If defeat is to be avoided, all Trojan wooden horses must be seen as the pantomime animals they really are. It has been the aim of this short book to emphasize this truth, and to indicate some of its implications for politics to-day. How to get better political organization and

¹ E. A. Mowrer, *Sinon, or the Future of Politics*, p. 86.

CONCLUSIONS AND PROSPECTS

how to cultivate richer human personality are not two problems, but one. In the long run, better individuals are the only steps to better politics. And therefore no system of politics which fails to provide scope for the richest possible diversity of individual capacity and personality can make for better politics. No system based on a rigid censorship, regimentation, or the domination of one single personality can prevent the entry of the wooden horse. It is the old truth that John Milton saw when he wrote *Areopagitica* in 1644: "Certainly then that people must needs be mad or strangely infatuated, that build the chief hope of their common happiness or safety on a single person ; who, if he happen to be good, can do no more than another man ; if to be bad, hath in his hands to do more evil without check than millions of other men. The happiness of a nation must needs be firmest and certainest in full and free council of their own electing, where no single person, but reason only, sways."

FURTHER READING

THE following books will be found useful for further discussion of the issues raised in this book. Each book has been chosen either because it is cheap and easily accessible, or because it is indispensable for the subject.

GENERAL

Sir N. ANGELL, *Peace with the Dictators ?* (Hamilton, 1938. 7s. 6d.)

ERNEST BARKER, *The Citizen's Choice*. (Cambridge University Press, 1937. 7s. 6d.)

W. H. CHAMBERLIN, *A False Utopia*. (Duckworth, 1937. 7s. 6d.)

G. D. H. and M. COLE, *Guide to Modern Politics*. (Gollancz, 1934. 6s.)

H. J. LASKI, *Liberty in the Modern State*. ("Pelican," 1938. 6d.)

M. OAKESHOTT, *The Social and Political Doctrines of Contemporary Europe*. (Cambridge University Press, 1939. 10s. 6d.)

BERTRAND RUSSELL, *Power : A New Social Analysis*. (Allen and Unwin, 1938. 7s. 6d.)

F. A. VOIGT, *Unto Cæsar*. (Constable, 1938. 10s.)

L. WOOLF, *After the Deluge*. ("Pelican," 1938. 6d.)

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MORE PARTICULAR

S. K. BAILEY, *Roosevelt and His New Deal*. (Fact, Oct. 1938. 6d.)

R. BASSETT, *The Essentials of Parliamentary Democracy*. (Macmillan, 1935. 7s. 6d.)

S. H. CAIR, *The Responsible Citizen*. ("Nelson Discussion Book," 1938. 2s.)

H. R. G. GREAVES, *The British Constitution*. (Allen and Unwin, 1938. 7s. 6d.)

LORD LONDONDERRY, *Ourselves and Germany*. ("Penguin Special," 1938. 6d.)

HAROLD MACMILLAN, *The Middle Way*. (Macmillan, 1938. 5s.)

B. MUSSOLINI, *My Autobiography*. (Hutchinson. 6d.)

HAROLD NICOLSON, *Diplomacy*. ("Home University Library," 1939. 5s.)

D. M. PICKLES, *The French Political Scene*. ("Nelson Discussion Book," 1938. 2s.)

S. H. ROBERTS, *The House that Hitler Built*. (Methuen, 1937. 12s. 6d.)

ERICH ROLL, *Spotlight on Germany*. (Faber, 1933. 2s. 6d.)

R. W. SETON-WATSON, *Britain and the Dictators*. (Cambridge University Press, 1938. 12s. 6d.)

A. SIEGFRIED, *America Comes of Age*. (Cape, 1931. 4s. 6d.)

PAT SLOAN, *Soviet Democracy*. (Gollancz, 1937. 6s.)

CLARENCE K. STREIT, *Union Now*. (Cape, 1939. 10s. 6d.)

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